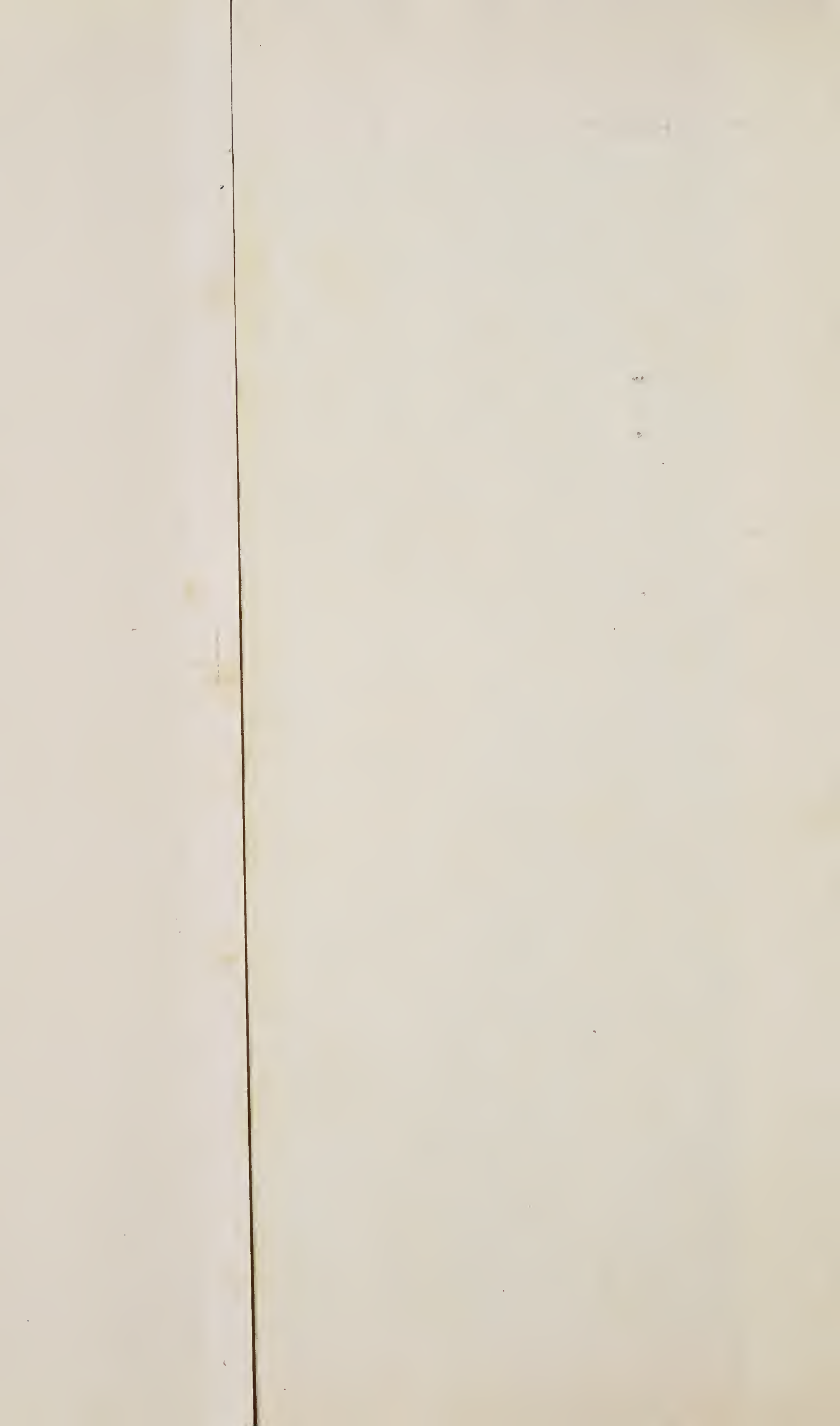



BUILDERS  
OF  
MODERN  
INDIA

**DYAL SINGH  
MAJITHIA**

**MADAN GOPAL**





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*Builders of Modern India*

# **DYAL SINGH MAJITHIA**

**Madan Gopal**

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## About the Series

The main purpose of this series is to record the chronicle of struggles and achievements of eminent men and women of India, who have spear-headed our freedom movement and national renaissance. Designed in the form of biographies, these handy volumes, written by knowledgeable persons, outline brief accounts of the life and contribution of the eminent leaders of this country. These volumes are meant to be constant sources of inspiration for the present generation as well as for posterity. These are not intended either to be comprehensive study or to replace the more elaborate and comprehensive biographies.

It has not been possible to publish these volumes in a chronological order as the work of writing these are entrusted to a cross-section of people. This Division aims to bring out biographies of all the eminent national personalities within a short period. Widest possible coverage of the great men and women of India under this series is the objective.



## Preface

The greatest son of the Punjab in the second half of the nineteenth century, Sirdar Dyal Singh (1848-98) of the Shergil, or Gill, clan of the Sardars of Majitha village near Amritsar is known as the founder of *The Tribune* and one who bequeathed largely self-earned assets, including prestigious buildings in Lahore, and lands in Amritsar, Lahore and Gurdaspur districts worth about Rs 30 lakh in 1898, to two trusts that later established the Dyal Singh College and Dyal Singh Library in Lahore. However, it is not so well-known that Dyal Singh bequeathed assets for the propagation of education and dissemination of knowledge at a time when trusts and endowments for such purposes were uncommon even in countries that later got the Carnegie and Ford Foundations etc. Nor so well-known are the facts that, according to Annie Besant, Dyal Singh was one among the 17 “good men and true” who decided in 1884, to found the Indian National Congress; or that he led a movement against the “orientalist” opponents to the establishment of the Punjab University in 1882, to teach through the medium of English; or that he was a leader of all progressive and social reform measures in the Punjab; or that he was the first president (till his death) of the Indian Association of Lahore; and also chairman, Board of Directors of the country’s first indigenous bank, viz. Punjab National Bank; or that he was a pillar of the Brahmo Samaj in the province and a trustee of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir in Calcutta.

The only son of General Lehna Singh, chief of the ordnance department of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Kashi-born Dyal Singh lost his parents when he was six-years-old, returned to the Punjab, got education in the Mission School at Amritsar and was later self-educated. A sojourn in



England and Europe during 1874-76, had broadened his outlook. The only scion of the family that had managed the affairs of the Golden Temple for nearly thirty years, Dyal Singh, in tune with the times, became a Brahmo, cut off his hair, smoked openly and lived in European style. Unlike other Jagirdars of his time, he took up the business of dealing in real estate and in diamonds and jewellery, earned large wealth, and was incredibly generous; he helped innumerable needy men and women, irrespective of caste or creed. He was considered a modern Hatam Tai. Significantly, he did not like this fact to be mentioned. Self-effacing, his name is not mentioned often in *The Tribune*, of which he was sole proprietor.

Here is an extract from the speech of the then Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab University and the Financial Commissioner, Punjab Government, Sir John Maynard, ICS, delivered on March 21, 1917: "I knew the Sirdar a little in earlier days. I was younger than the Sirdar, but I had read of him, what he was to friends... He never sought the smiles of fortune, was just, generous, wise, tolerant of the opinions of others, never sought the friendship of men of wealth or position, but of men of character. He gave to others, but sought nothing from them. He was a scholar, I might say a great scholar. In the controversy that led to the Punjab University being established on Western model, he played a worthy part. He was what might be called a great gentleman. He was a lover of music and arts, which required to be rehabilitated. He was a man of business, and always kept his accounts himself. He was absolutely truthful. He was a great Punjabi patriot, I might say a great Indian patriot... The Sirdar was not only a great patriot, but also a great philanthropist... He gave freely in charity, but he never allowed his head to run away with the heart. Though his charities were numerous, he never gave until he was satisfied that it deserved his assistance. He made a great will, but he never boasted of what he did. He did good without telling people of it... And as I knew of him and read of him, I wondered more and more why it had not struck any one that it was necessary and desirable to write a life of him".

It is surprising, therefore, that whereas numerous books have been written on the founders of the *Kesari* of Pune and *The Hindu* of Madras, founded about the same time as *The Tribune*, no biography of this remarkable man has been written so far. The only available publication on the



subject is a small pamphlet written by P.N. Kirpal and L.R. Nair written and published by the Dyal Singh College, Lahore, on the occasion of its silver jubilee in 1935. Dyal Singh died issueless, and his cousin and widow, to whom he had bequeathed the ancestral properties, sold them off to fight the validity of his will. Indeed, the family of Dyal Singh's great-grandfather Nodh Singh has disappeared. It is only the 113-year-old newspaper *The Tribune* and college and library named after Dyal Singh that have survived.

When India was partitioned in 1947, *The Tribune* shifted to Shimla (then to Ambala and, subsequently, to Chandigarh), but the college and the public library named after him remained in Lahore. While the names of many institutions in Pakistan underwent a change, it is a tribute to Dyal Singh that the Pakistan Government have retained his name for the college and public library. These and the Dyal Singh College at Karnal and New Delhi and Dyal Singh Public Library, New Delhi, are the reminders of the munificence of a great man who has left his mark in Indian subcontinent. By any definition, he was among the builders of modern India. Such then is the man whose personality I have attempted to project in this book. How far I have succeeded, is for the readers to judge.

Madan Gopal



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## Prologue

**T**HE BEGINNING OF the 19th century saw the rise in India of two great men. One of them, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, used the sword to carve out a kingdom for himself; and the other, Rammohun Roy who wielded a powerful pen which got him the title of Raja and the status of an envoy plenipotentiary of the Moghul Emperor to the court of St. James.

Ranjit Singh, who was born at his mother's house near Jind in present-day Haryana in 1780, was the son of the chief of a *misl* located in Sukerchak near Gujranwala in the Punjab. The father headed one of the twelve *misls*, or groups of freebooters, that had arisen in the Punjab in the wake of Afghan invasions of north India in the 18th century. Under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the *misls* resisted the invaders and later harassed and chased them on their return journey with rich booty, the *misls* often recovering part of their acquisitions. Apart from this loot, the *misls* levied taxes in lieu of the protection they afforded to those living in their areas. In peacetime they quarrelled amongst themselves.

Half of the one dozen *misls* centred round towns west of Satluj and the other half in the Malwa region between the Yamuna and the Satluj. Ranjit Singh, whose father, Maha Singh, was the chief of the Sukerchakia *misl*, was ten years of age when he saw battle against the Bhangi *misl*'s stronghold near Gujarat. Maha Singh suddenly took ill, and it was left to Ranjit Singh to surround the fort. The local Bhangi chief awaited succour from Lahore. But Ranjit defeated the succour, occupied Gujarat fort and then rushed to take part in his father's funeral. Maha Singh had killed the Kanhya *misl* chief in a dispute with the Bhangi *misls* over Jammu. The dying Kanhya chief desired his grand daughter Mahatab Kaur be given in marriage to Ranjit Singh. The marriage took place at Batala when Ranjit was 15. His mother-in-law Sada Kaur was an ambitious woman and

she helped the son-in-law materially in his career. Later, she fell out and intrigued against Ranjit Singh, seeking even British help. As Mahatab Kaur gave Ranjit no child, he married again after three years, this time the sister of the Nakki *misl* chief. The two matrimonial alliances helped the shrewd Ranjit Singh to consolidate his position against the other *misls*, especially those west of the Satluj.

The Afghan King Zaman Shah who had the support of his Pathan vassals in Multan and Kasur, as also of the Phulkian *misl* of Patiala and of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra invaded Punjab thrice on his way to Delhi. He had to fight the *misls*. On the third occasion, a meeting of the confederacy of twelve *misls* was called at Amritsar. There was division in the ranks of the *misls*. Some wished to fight, others to negotiate. Ranjit Singh, then 18, with Sada Kaur's support, stood firm. Those who had lost heart also agreed to help him in repulsing Zaman Shah.

The Afghan forces were routed five miles from Amritsar and then chased to Lahore. Thanks to Ranjit Singh and others' efforts, Lahore was saved. But it was now occupied by three Sikh chiefs, who were easygoing, living a licentious life and quarrelling amongst themselves. Feeling oppressed by them, the people of Lahore sent word to Ranjit Singh to come and occupy Lahore. Ranjit Singh mobilised 25,000 people at an opportune moment and stormed Lahore. At the age of 19, he thus became the master of Lahore, the most important city of the Punjab. Other *misls*, the Bhangis and Ahluwalias, who had been eclipsed, created trouble for Ranjit Singh, but he proved quite a match. "As sunflowers turn to the rising sun, people from all over the country began to flock to the court of the young Sukerchakia. Sons of chiefs came to join his army; scholars and doctors came for employment under him; artisans and craftsmen came to obtain royal patronage; troupes of courtesans came to seek personal favours."

Ranjit Singh installed himself in the fort and started holding a regular durbar. He engaged talented men, irrespective of religion or caste. He proclaimed that his domain was not only for the Sikhs, but for all Punjabis, Hindus and Muslims included. His trusted men were Missar Diwan Chand and Fakeer Azeezuddin.

The title of Maharaja gave Ranjit Singh the sort of title and legal right to demand tributes from territories that had, in the past, paid tribute to the



Lahore durbar. Ranjit Singh's forces now defeated the Pathans of Kasur who paid a heavy penalty and agreed to recognise Ranjit Singh as their sovereign. Ranjit Singh advanced to Batala to recover two villages of Sada Kaur which Sansar Chand had occupied. Sansar Chand withdrew his forces and Ranjit Singh not only recovered the two villages but also took some more and gave them to Sada Kaur. Then he went to Taran Taran where he won over Fateh Singh of the Ahluwalia *misl*. The two exchanged turbans and became brothers in faith. He then crossed the Jhelum, and took over Rawalpindi and Cambelpur.

Ranjit Singh joined hands with Sada Kaur and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to take over Amritsar. Mai Sukhan of the Bhangi *misl*, who did not get the promised support from the Ramgarhias *misl*, also surrendered and was pensioned off.

With the capture of Amritsar, the second largest city of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh's fame soared high. Deserters from the East India Company and even a few Europeans sought to serve under him. These included Jean Baptist Ventura, Jean Francois Allard, M. Henri Court and Paolo de Avitabile.

By merging the six *misls* holding territories west of the Satluj, Ranjit Singh in about ten years time had consolidated his hold on the Punjab. The areas outside his control were those of half a dozen *misls* from the Satluj to the Yamuna, south of which the British held sway. The future of these *misls* was linked, in some ways, to the Anglo-French rivalry.

Napoleon at one time had imagined that one day, with a turban on his head and the *Quran* in his hands, he would ride an elephant to India to plant the French tricolour on the banks of the Ganges. After disasters in Egypt and Syria this was not to be. His ally Tipu had been liquidated by the British who, after the defeat of the Marathas, now directly or indirectly controlled almost the whole of India, except the Punjab. This was the time when the Anglo-French confrontation in Europe was at its peak, with its extension to India.

The British campaign against the Marathas had so weakened the East India Company's finances that the Board of Directors had directed against any more wars, and decided that the Yamuna be accepted as the northern extremity of the Company's domains, despite the fact that, when Lord Lake was chasing Holkar into the Punjab and Ranjit Singh was not willing

to help Holkar, Ranjit Singh had suggested that Satluj should be the border between the British and his kingdom. The British had then ignored this suggestion. Indeed, they did not react when Ranjit crossed the Satluj twice to settle affairs of the *misls* in the region between the Satluj and the Yamuna.

The principal threat to Britain at this time was from France. By the middle of 1807, France had replaced Britain in the Near and Middle East. For, when the Shah of Persia sought Britain's assistance against Russia and Britain refused, he asked for French help. Three articles of the Franco-Persian treaty referred specifically to facilities and assistance to the French forces pitted against the British in India.

At Tilsit, Napoleon had also entered into an agreement with the Tsar of Russia, whereunder Russian armies were to advance through Persia, Afghanistan, Sindh and Punjab to throw the British out of India. The British Governor-General of India sent envoys to Kabul, Teheran and Lahore to enter into alliances with them against any possible French invasion. However, in the mid-1808, came Napoleon's involvement with the rebellion in Spain. The position in the Near and Middle East changed rapidly. The Tilsit agreement made Persia and Turkey both inimical to Russia, to turn to Britain. In January 1809, came the Anglo-Turkish Treaty and in March the Anglo-Persian Treaty.

Ranjit Singh's suggestion to Lord Lake to make the Satluj the common boundary was now taken out of the shelf and Ranjit Singh was told that, under the treaty of Bassein, the Marathas had transferred all their rights in the trans-Yamuna areas to the British. In February 1809, the East India Company proclaimed that the Malwa chiefs, between the Yamuna and the Satluj were under British protection.

Ranjit Singh's forces which had occupied Multan in June 1818, later on captured the Afghan pockets of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan. In November 1818, he took Peshawar. The capture of all these places gave him ideas of subduing Sindh. But the British were quick. With friendship with Kabul, they aimed at taking Sindh, and negotiated with the Amirs of Sindh, all disunited, in the name of navigation up the Sindh and commerce with north India. Alexander Burnes was sent in the guise of one heading a reconnaissance party. The British Governor-General conveyed to Ranjit Singh that he better keep his hands



off Sindh and feel free and turn his attention to the Himalayas or the Pathan territory between the Punjab and Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh knew where he stood. He sent Zorawar to subdue Ladakh, his son to take Kashmir, and Hari Singh Nalwa to Khyber Pass.

Ranjit Singh was the only ruler in India who had correctly assessed the British character. He reversed the trend of previous 150 years and made Indian troops advance northwards to Jamrud in Afghanistan. However, within ten years of his death in 1839, the kingdom which he had carved out ceased to exist as an identity.

While the British gobbled up the Sikh kingdom, the process that the other great man, Rammohun Roy had initiated, resulted in the course of time, in the end of the British Empire. Born of a family of the highest order among Brahmins (*Kulins*) at Radhanagar, now in Burdwan district of West Bengal, his immediate ancestors had left the Brahminical profession for the worldly pursuits in the service of Mughal princes. Rammohun Roy's father, Ramakant Roy, was a man of property that yielded a "revenue of several lakhs of rupees." Because of their association with the Mughal princes, the Roys were steeped in Islamic culture. As he himself wrote: "In conformity with the usage of my paternal race, and the wish of my father, I studied Persian and Arabic languages, these being accomplishments indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of Mohammedan princes; and, agreeable to the usage of my maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of Sanskrit, and the theological literature, law and religion." He studied the *Quran*, Islamic theology and law, was steeped deeply in the lyrical raptures of Persian *ghazals*, and Sufism. The monotheistic spirit of Islam made a deep impact on him. As he said: "At the age of about sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus. This, together with my known sentiments on the subject, produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred. I proceeded on my travels and passed through different countries chiefly within, but some beyond the bounds of Hindustan."

After his travels, spanning three to four years, he settled down in Banaras, the seat of Sanskrit culture and learning. It is acknowledged that here he acquired a thorough knowledge of Brahminical literature, including *Smritis*, *Upanishads*, *Brahmanas* and the *Gita*.

Roused from the “dogmatic slumber” by the impact of Islamic monotheism, and then the monism of *Vedanta*, he became a rationalist. He also studied the *Old Testament* and *Talmud* in Hebrew and the *New Testament* in Greek. He was convinced that at the core of teachings of all religions—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity—was the belief that God is one, without a second, and that He alone is to be worshipped. The differences in methods of initiation, rituals and symbols were imposed by geographical, climatic and ethnic factors. His genius for synthesis enabled him to evolve the doctrine of universalism in religion. He conceived the idea of an Indian church for the “unsectarian worship of one True God.” His basic approach to life was humanism. Brushing aside the concept that the scriptures of the Brahmins were a close preserve of the esoteric few, he translated parts of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* into English and Bengali.

After he left Banaras in 1794, he came in contact with several Europeans. “I gave up my prejudices against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants. I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstitions, and my interference with their custom of burning widows and other pernicious practices, increased their animosity against me, with renewed force, and, through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.”

By presenting the quintessence of Indian scriptures to the Europeans, Rammohun Roy became, in the words of Max Mueller “the first to complete a connected life current between the East and the West.”

Rammohun Roy read books on empirical philosophy and scientific thought from Bacon to Locke and Newton. Attempts at giving concrete shape to the political ideas, which he knew had stirred the Western world, gripped his attention and he took lively interest in the French Revolution and the American independence movement.

Says his biographer, Soumendra Nath Tagore: “The strands that went into the making of the wondrous web that was Rammohun’s mind, represented all that was the very essence of Semitic culture in both the Hebraic and Arabic tradition, Hindu culture as embodied in *Vedanta* and



*Upanishads* as well as the new learning based on scientific, economic and utilitarian thought, as distinguished from the Jewish and Greco-Roman heritage. He culled the rarest gems of thought from the Old World and the New, to equip himself for the fulfilment of his mission of transforming India to the core.”

Between 1814, when he settled down in Calcutta; and 1830, when he sailed to England – never to return – he carried on a crusade against religious bigotry and the evils that these produced, and for educational, economic and political reforms and also a very powerful agitation for preserving the freedom of the Press. For the fulfilment of these aims he undertook work in several directions.

In 1815, he set up Atmiya Sabha, a forum for free discussion on fundamental religious issues and a platform for agitations against *Sati*, against caste system, against *Kulinism*. The recital of the *Vedas* and exposition of the texts were major activities of the Sabha.

Through the Sabha, Rammohun was attempting for the first time in India to mobilize public opinion through the powerful medium of the printed word and the use of the printing press, which he learnt from the missionaries of Serampore. Rammohun Roy put out a series of pamphlets in Bengali and English on the question of *Sati*. These roused the people to no end, and ultimately succeeded in forcing the Government to ban *Sati*. Rammohun fought not only for the Indian women’s rights to live as individuals after the death of their husbands but also for their rights to inherit a part of the property.

One result of his fight against the powerful sections in every segment of society was the establishment in 1827, of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee. The Committee’s work was ahead of the times. And on its ashes came up the great premises of Brahmo Sabha in 1828. The Sabha continued to attract more and more members. Within two years, Rammohun Roy was able to purchase a house to serve as the permanent place of worship for everyone who believed in monotheism.

An universalist, he had studied the scriptures to find that there was a fundamental unity in the essentials of all the religions. He always identified the unity of the Godhead. The trust-deed of the Brahmo Sabha had clearly mentioned that the trustees “shall at all times permit the same building, land and premises, to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied, as

and for a place of public meeting, of all sorts and descriptions of people, without distinction, for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under, by any other name, designation or title, peculiarly used for and applied to any particular being or beings, by any man or set of men whatsoever...but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.”

Since his early youth, Rammohun Roy was seized with the idea of freeing the Spirit of Man from the shackles of superstition, ignorance and unreason, and till the very end, he pursued this idea by encouraging religious, social and educational reforms. He had to fight against heavy odds, because officialdom was opposed to the dissemination of knowledge and to the teaching of English.

The East India Company's opposition to the introduction of learning, or the spread of Western system of education, was prompted not by any regard for Oriental learning, but for calculated self-interest. One of the members of the Court of Directors had stated that England had lost America, because she had allowed the establishment of schools and colleges there, and so it would be a folly to do the same in India. There was Rammohun Roy clearly for a science-oriented education to foster a renaissance, which would do for India, what the revival of learning had done for Europe. He supported the efforts made by the missionaries and individual Eurasians to set up schools for the teaching of English.

Those among Rammohun Roy's contemporaries, who had eyes to see, realised that he had unerringly pointed to the path of India's regeneration. They formed themselves into a group that came to be called Anglicists, to continue the agitation for the introduction of Western education along modern lines.

It may be added that half a century later, the Education Commission, in its report, wrote: “It took twelve years of controversy, the advocacy of Macaulay and the decisive action of a new Governor-General, before the Committee could, as a body, acquiesce in the policy advocated by Rammohun Roy. There is no great modern Indian but a product of the



synthetic culture fostered by the fusion of Western ideas and Indian thought. Who can doubt that the process of fusion was hastened by the adoption of educational policy advocated by Rammohun Roy? Modern India itself vindicates his prophetic vision.”

Raja Rammohun Roy’s greatest follower in Upper India was Sirdar Dyal Singh, in whose person the two strands seemed to have fused. Born nine years after Ranjit Singh’s death and fifteen years after Raja Rammohun Roy’s demise, this scion of the family that helped Ranjit Singh carve out a Sikh kingdom was the greatest Brahmo in the Punjab. He was thus a descendant of one in flesh and of the other in spirit.

## The Family Tree

ACCORDING TO AN old Punjabi saying the three families that have produced the greatest number of remarkable men in the Punjab have been the Attariwalas, the Manns and the Majithias.

The Majithias, belonging to Majitha village, some 20 kilometers north of Amritsar, are divided into three branches all claiming a common ancestor some fourteen generations earlier. About one hundred years ago, these three branches were represented by Dyal Singh, Mahatab Singh and Surat Singh. Dyal Singh and Mahatab Singh were fifth cousins, the former's family being the first in rank and influence.

Dyal Singh's great grandfather, Sardar Nodh Singh, was an influential zamindar of the Shergil Jat tribe. He married the sister of a wealthy Sardar, Amar Singh Bhaga of the Kanhya *misl* of Gurdaspur district, and acted as Zaildar, or feudal retainer, for his brother-in-law. He was given a *jagir* which included two wells at Majitha village. This *jagir* was inherited, on Nodh Singh's death in 1788, by the twenty-year-old Desa Singh, who also served the Bhaga Sardar till 1809.

When, in 1809, Ranjit Singh asked the Bhaga Sardar to provide the traditional supplies to his forces on their way of Kangra, to help Sansar Chand Katoch, the Bhaga Sardar refused, and thus offended the "rising sun" of the Punjab. Desa Singh let down his relation, the Bhaga Sardar, and went over to Ranjit Singh's side. He was welcomed and given the *jagirs* of Sukalgarh and Bhagowal, earlier owned by the Bhaga Sardars. Ranjit Singh repulsed the Gurkhas who had invaded Kangra, seized the fort and made Desa Singh a commandant of the fort at Kangra.

Skilful in negotiations, Desa Singh soon won over the sensitive and proud chiefs of such small states as Chamba, Nurpur, Shahpur, Jasrota, Basholi, Mankot, Jaswan, Mandi, Siba, Golar, Kalur, Suket, Kulu and



Datarpur. In 1811, he captured Kotla and organised for his master, Ranjit Singh, a formal levee in the fort at Kangra. All the hill chiefs attended it. In recognition of his loyal services, Ranjit Singh conferred a *jagir* of Rs 7,000 per annum and appointed Desa Singh Subedar for the hill areas. Desa Singh came to be known as “Pahar Badshah”. Two years later, he annexed Haripur also.

When Ranjit Singh reorganised his army at Govindgarh, he kept the pick of his generals in the section directly under him. They were to be available at short notice. Desa Singh was among them. And he assisted Ranjit in his early campaigns. A loyal general, he was appointed not only the Governor of the hill states but also – and this is significant – Nazim or Governor of the Punjab’s second biggest city, Amritsar. He was also placed in charge of the affairs of Harmandir Saheb, Golden Temple, a coveted position of trust and honour.

In 1818, when Ranjit Singh’s forces, under his son Kharak Singh, captured Multan, those who assisted Kharak Singh were Desa Singh and his son Lehna Singh. Ranjit Singh conferred *jagirs* of the value of Rs 1,24,250 per annum on the father and the son. These *jagirs* were scattered all over and included Majitha, Khudpur, Tiloknath, Harriki, Naoshera-Nangli and Zamanabad.

After the Multan campaign, Desa Singh returned to his governorship of the hill areas and of the Doaba and the Manjha areas: one a granary of the Punjab and the other the cradle of the Sikh faith. His territory extended not only to the hill areas, but also from the foothills to Kasur, or one-fourth of the sprawling area of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh. He was given Bagguwala in Ferozepur district, where he built a fort. He was “too much in the sun” at the court of Ranjit Singh, who conferred the title of Kasir-ul-Iqtidar, or the Chief of Exalted Dignity, on him.

Once Desa Singh seized the territory of the Raja of Bilaspur, on the eastern side of the Satluj. There was a protest by the British assistant political agent in the hill states, a certain Captain Ross. Ranjit Singh made Desa Singh apologise for the indiscretion. Captain Ross accepted the apology readily and became friendly to Desa Singh. When Ranjit Singh came to know of the closeness between them, he forbade Desa Singh to have social relations with any British officer. A British officer, Moorcraft, passing through Amritsar in 1820, found that Desa Singh was unable to

visit him on account of the prohibition.

Instructions in regard to Desa Singh's meeting with the British were in sharp contrast to Ranjit Singh's complete confidence in Desa Singh's eldest son Lehna Singh, who had already made a mark in the service of the Maharaja, especially in the campaign with his father, under prince Kharak Singh, against Multan.

Desa Singh died in 1832, leaving behind three sons: Lehna Singh, Gujar Singh and Ranjodh Singh. While Lehna Singh was up and coming, Gujar Singh did not prove worthy of his parentage. Once Ranjit Singh deputed him to deliver some gifts meant for the King of England, to the British Governor-General in Calcutta. In effect this was to be a diplomatic mission and Gujar Singh was to find out the East India Company's plans in regard to Shikarpur in Sindh. Gujar Singh went to Calcutta heading a 100-strong contingent of men especially picked for the mission. A man of average ability, considerable conceit and a habitual debauch, Gujar Singh fell desperately in love with a European lady in Calcutta, forgot all about his mission, and, rather than fathom the British designs on Shikarpur, he was expressing himself too freely to the European lady. When Ranjit Singh came to know of the conversion of a diplomatic mission into a matrimonial mission, he was upset. Gujar Singh was recalled. He came back without any information and also without his European lady friend but with plenty of English airs and graces. His acquired manners and etiquette caused great amusement at Ranjit Singh's durbar. Downcast, he drowned his sorrow in drinking champagne. One evening he walked over the parapet of a 40-foot high roof and fell to death. This was in sharp contrast to the rise of Lehna Singh, his elder brother, who had already made a mark in the service of the Maharaja. He was a great mathematician and an astronomer. His fame as an inventor had travelled far and wide. The Europeans who visited Lahore would not go away without a visit to his laboratory. In 1831, when Alexander Burnes undertook a reconnaissance of the river Indus and the riparian states, a prelude to the annexation of Sindh, Ranjit Singh grasped the implications of his flotilla and deputed Lehna Singh, who alone of his durbar could question Burnes on the instruments installed to collect data for navigation by bigger vessels.

Lehna Singh received Burnes, when the latter entered the territories of the Punjab on June 7, 1831, with a gun salute and a guard of honour.



Burnes was carrying a gift of five dray-horses from the King of England for Ranjit Singh and at Lehna Singh's request, a shoe of one of the horses was sent to the Maharaja to give him an idea of the size of the horses. Burnes, who had a poor opinion of Orientals on scientific matters, was impressed with Lehna Singh's knowledge of mathematics, of the movement of stars and his insatiable curiosity about the working of scientific instruments. He presented the Sardar with a thermometer.

On Desa Singh's death in 1832, Lehna Singh inherited the governorship of Amritsar, and also the charge of the hill areas. He also held the prestigious position of being in charge of Harminder Saheb. The flagstaff erected by Lehna Singh in front of the Akal Bunga in the Golden Temple still stands by the side of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's flagstaff. He enjoyed the esteem and confidence of the durbar, as a wise and popular administrator. He also received the income from Desa Singh's *jagir* and royal grants totalling Rs 1,24,250 per annum. He earmarked a *jagir* (worth Rs 4,813 per annum) in Taran Taran tehsil, for Desa Singh's *samadhi*.

Lehna Singh was an inventor and he designed a mechanism resembling a clock, showing the hour, date, day of the week and phases of the moon and other constellations.\* He also reformed the calendar and won a name among the astronomers of the time. In astrology too, he had few equals. It was to Lehna Singh that Ranjit Singh always turned whenever he saw a new and powerful weapon, and Lehna Singh invariably succeeded in producing something better. He controlled Sikh ordnance factories at Lahore and Amritsar. Many "beautiful guns designed by him" later fell into the hands of the British and excited their admiration.

An expert in ordnance, he effected marked improvements in the ordnance department of Ranjit Singh's army. In recognition of his work, he was awarded the title of Hisamuddoulah, or the Sword of the State.

Lehna Singh devoted most of his time after duties of the state to scholarly pursuits, to mathematics, to science and the learning of Sanskrit, Persian and other languages.

Once a year he toured the hill areas to redress grievances and to examine the accounts. He was a kind and benevolent man and, like Desa Singh before him, he bore the character of being one of the best governors

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\* *The Tribune* in 1893, asked Government to acquire a unique clock in the possession of Raja Harbans Singh and place it in the Punjab Museum.

that the Sikh rule produced. Contemporary chroniclers, without exception, praised Lehna Singh as the wisest, the best, the purest, the most cultured and enlightened of the Sikh chiefs. According to one chronicler, "Lehna Singh was a man of considerable ability. As an administrator, he was very popular. The poor were never oppressed by him. His assessments were moderate and his decisions essentially just. As a statesman, he may be said to have been almost the only honest man in Lahore durbar. Fraud and corruption were supreme, but the hands of Lehna Singh were always clean. Surrounded by the most greedy and unscrupulous of schemers, he preserved his honesty unsullied. But he had one failing which made shipwreck of all his virtues. He was a coward. Timid and superstitious, he was ever ready at the approach of danger to run off to Hardwar to bathe or to Banaras to feed a crowd of hungry Brahmins."

It is not without significance that when Ranjit Singh moved against his scheming mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, he entrusted the unpleasant job of seizing her possessions and arresting her to none other than Lehna Singh. "She died in captivity."

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, in 1839, was followed by a period of near anarchy. Personal intrigues involving the claimants to the *gaddi*, Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Multana Singh, Peshaura Singh, the three Dogra brothers, Chet Singh, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, and two Sandhanwallia chiefs Attar Singh and Ajit Singh were carried to murderous lengths. The British also played their cards adroitly.

The person who succeeded Ranjit Singh was his eldest son, Kharak Singh by his second wife. Kharak Singh favoured the Dogra chief Chet Singh, to the envy of his two brothers, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh. The latter two were naturally not favourably inclined towards Kharak Singh, or his son Naunihal Singh. Nor was the latter disposed favourably towards them. Within a few months of Ranjit Singh's death, Chet Singh was murdered and the following year Kharak Singh also died. His son, Naunihal Singh, was killed, while returning from the funeral rites of his father. A large piece of stone, it is said, was deliberately placed to fall on him, as he was passing through the gate.

Kharak Singh's widow, Mai Chand Kaur, became a regent. She appointed Gulab Singh as the Commander-in-Chief and gave him the charge of defence of the city of Lahore. In January 1841, Sher Singh



shelled the city and forced his entry into the fort. Mai Chand Kaur's reign of a month-and-a-half was over. Sher Singh and Dogra chief Dhian Singh saw that the army was all powerful. In fact, Sher Singh once threw up his hands in despair. There was so much of disorder everywhere that even Ranjit Singh's foreign commanders found it difficult to protect their own persons. One of them, M. Henri Court, barely escaped with his life. Another one General Paolo Avitabile, asked the British agent in Peshawar to help him escape to Europe. The Governor of Kashmir, Col. Meehan Singh, and the garrison commander of Amritsar, Sobha Singh, were murdered. Lehna Singh too hid himself in Jamadar Khushāl Singh's home till the end of the siege.

The Sandhanwallias struck a deal with the Dogra brothers. Ajit Singh murdered Sher Singh and his son. The Dogra general, Dhian Singh, too was murdered. Hira Singh, son of Dhian Singh and a one-time favourite of Ranjit Singh, came forward, overthrew the Sandhanwallias, killed them and proclaimed Duleep Singh, the youngest son of Ranjit Singh by Rani Jindan, as the new Maharaja. Hira Singh and his adviser, Pandit Jalla, were both against Lehna Singh. The latter found his life endangered.

Filled with sudden religious aspirations, Lehna Singh, accompanied by 2500 men, and carrying lots of wealth, left the Punjab on a pilgrimage to Hardwar, and then on to Allahabad, Banaras, Jagannath Puri and Calcutta. Lt. Col. Richmond, the agent of the NWFP Agency, wrote on May 3, 1844: "Of all the present genuine Sikh leaders, Lehna Singh is the first in ability and energy. He is also a bigot in his religion and he has no pretensions to the throne of the Punjab. He is narrow-minded. However, in matters other than those of faith, avarice may some time or the other overcome both his aversions and predilections."

In his view, "the Sardar, who wants in hardihood of character, although an able man, probably wishes to keep aloof during the struggles which may sooner or later again convulse the Punjab."

A secret dispatch by the British agent sent to Calcutta on June 11, 1844 said: "Lehna Singh is leaving Mathura. He has no intension of returning to Lahore, until matters have become more settled. Raja Hira Singh is aware of his absence from the durbar." Lehna Singh ignored appeals from the Sikh Sardars and even Rani Jindan to return to Punjab.

Then Hira Singh was killed by Rani Jindan's men at the end of 1844. Her brother Jawahar Singh was appointed Wazir in May 1845. As Hira Singh's uncle Gulab Singh encouraged Peshaura Singh, one of the sons of Ranjit Singh, then living at his *jagir* near Sialkot, to proclaim himself Maharaja, Jawahar Singh sent the forces under Lehna Singh's half-brother, Ranjodh Singh, to Jammu against Gulab Singh. He crushed the rebellion. Peshaura Singh was murdered. Soon after Ranjodh Singh's return, the British declared war on the Sikh kingdom and Ranjodh Singh was sent to fight the British in the first Anglo-Sikh War in November 1845. He captured the baggage of the army under Sir Harry Smith at Badowal on January 21, 1846. A week later, however, his forces were defeated at Aliwal. The British had won.

Lehna Singh, awaiting events in Calcutta, and declaring on March 11, 1846, that "I do not concern myself about public affairs, because it is now two years since I left my country for this, and have built a house at Banaras for the purpose of visiting that place of worship and serving the Almighty", was persuaded by the Council and the British Resident to return from Calcutta to Lahore. The British Resident, Henry Lawrence, who had been deeply impressed by the "most respectable but least courageous chief", had decided, even before Lehna Singh arrived in Lahore, to appoint him to the old charge of the governorship of Amritsar, Govindgarh and the Manjha areas.

Lawrence, in control of affairs at the Lahore durbar, divided the durbar areas into four judicial districts, each one under a judge: Lehna Singh for the Manjha lands, south-east of the Ravi up to the hills and down to Kasur; General Kahan Singh for Lahore; Ram Singh Jassawala for Chhaj Doab; and Chhatar Singh Attariwala for the area between the Jhelum and the Indus.

Sardar Ranjodh Singh, who was Lehna Singh's half-brother and who had managed Lehna Singh's estates for two years of his absence from the Punjab, wanted that half the property be given to him. But Lehna Singh refused and wished to give only one-twentieth of the whole. It was at the instance of Sir Henry Lawrence, that Lehna Singh agreed to give his half-brother an annual *jagir* of Rs 12,000.

Lehna Singh, who joined the Council of Regency in August 1847, managed the affairs of Manjha well. He tried to give peace to the people.



Said Lawrence: "He has exerted himself in the apprehension of murderers, dacoits and robbers in Manjha, but has a strong objection to capital punishment. He is the most respectable and the most sensible Sardar in the Punjab, and were he less timid, he would be well adapted to manage the country, but his fear of offending any one high or low often amounts to the ridiculous and neutralises much of his usefulness. However, considering all circumstances, I look on his accession to the Council, as an interesting gain; his presence in the Council would have a healthy effect."

Ranjodh Singh, who had been appointed Judge of Lahore, did not get along too well with the British. The discovery that he had hidden some guns of Lehna Singh, led to his removal from the position of judgeship. The fact that he was in correspondence with Governor Mul Raj of Multan, who had taken up arms against the British, went against him, and he was arrested and placed under surveillance. He was released only after the second Anglo-Sikh War. Though his *jagirs* had been confiscated by the durbar, Lehna Singh provided him a pension of Rs 2,500 for life. After Lehna Singh's death, the British increased it to Rs 3,000 a year.

Lehna Singh foresaw more troubles coming, and decided once again to leave for Banaras. He bade farewell to the durbar on January 14, 1848, and on February 2, 1848, after giving away large sums of money in charities, he went from Amritsar to Majitha and from there to the source of the Ganga. And then on to Banaras, where in 1848, a son was born to him.

Except for the religious endowments amounting to Rs 57,000 all his *jagirs* were now resumed by the state, with a promise to restore them whenever he returned to the province. When Lehna Singh returned to the Punjab in 1851, after the second Anglo-Sikh War, to look after his property, he was deeply distressed at the turn the events had taken and the end of the Khalsa Raj. After two years i.e. in 1853, he again went back to Banaras, where he died in 1854, leaving behind his wife and a six-year-old son. The astrologers of Banaras had worked out that when Dyal Singh grew up, he was destined to herald a new age to achieve greatness in important fields of activity, and become famous. It was also indicated that he would travel to countries across the seas.

## Early Years

**A** FEW MONTHS after Lehna Singh's death in 1854, his wife also passed away, leaving behind the only child, young Dyal Singh, aged six years. His relations decided to leave Banaras and return to Majitha village. Dyal Singh was among strangers in Majitha, but they welcomed his homecoming. He was the inheritor of the one of the wealthiest estates in the Punjab. The properties inherited included the whole village of Gallowali and lands, gardens and houses in Majitha village of Amritsar district; in Dyalpore, Burj (Nawabad), Puk Bhagwan, Patti and Bhala Pind villages of Amritsar district; in Mirza Jan village of Gurdaspur district, and also in the city of Lahore and its suburbs. Inheritor of a name second to none, Dyal Singh showed that he had an inquisitive mind and a great hunger for knowledge.

As the boy Dyal Singh was too young, his estates were entrusted to a court of wards, and the boy placed under the guardianship of Raja Tej Singh. The Raja was to keep Lehna Singh's estate intact and also to look after the upbringing, education and development of the boy. There were no schools or colleges then. Teaching was restricted to small *maktabs* or *pathshalas*, where rudiments of the three R's were taught. As this system of education was not considered good enough for Dyal Singh, an English governess was engaged. Competent teachers at home and later at the Christian Mission School helped shape the character of the ward.

This Raja Tej Singh, who was entrusted with the job of Dyal Singh's upbringing, had played an important part in Sikh history. A Gaur Brahmin from a village near Sardana, in Meerut district of present-day Uttar Pradesh, he was called to Lahore in 1812, by his uncle Khushal Singh who had earlier gone to Lahore and carved a place for himself at Ranjit Singh's



darbar. By sheer dint of hard work and loyalty to the Maharaja, he had become the latter's Deorhi Sardar, or palace doorkeeper, trusted by the Maharaja and was also assigned the task of fixing appointments. Ranjit Singh asked him, as he asked others, to join the Khalsa brotherhood. He did so, even though his brother, Ram Lal, who had also come to Lahore, refused to do so and left. However, his nephew, Tej Ram joined the fraternity, and was given the name of Tej Singh. His uncle Khushal Singh, then a Jamadar, rose high and became one of the trusted generals of Ranjit Singh, and took part in many a conquest by the Maharaja's forces. So did Tej Singh. In 1844, Khushal Singh passed away. Tej Singh, who was away to Peshawar, was called back to the darbar.

Wealthy and influential, Tej Singh was among the foremost actors in the drama leading to the end of the Sikh kingdom. He, along with Lehna Singh, Sher Singh Attariwala and Faqir Nuruddin, was nominated to the Regency Council. Later, he was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the Khalsa army. Known for his advocacy of moderation, he was against precipitating a war with the British. The Sikh Sardars and members of the panchayat of Sikh regiments were opposed to him. So was Rani Jindan, the mother of Ranjit Singh's last successor Duleep Singh. The Rani hated Tej Singh and considered him to be a collaborator of the British and responsible for the banishment of her paramour and former Prime Minister, Lal Singh. At Lawrence's instance the title of Raja was to be conferred upon Tej Singh, the Commander-in-Chief. Rani Jindan delayed the arrival of her son Duleep Singh at the darbar for the installation ceremony by an hour. The Sardars and the British officials were annoyed. According to Hardinge, "When Tej Singh knelt at the little prince's feet, to have his forehead anointed by the boy, dipping his finger in perfumed oil, he refused, and when he was pressed to do so he tucked his little hands and arms and resolutely resisted any entreaty... It is known that the Rani had drilled the boy to play his part two days before."

The British stood by Tej Singh. On the annexation of the Punjab his *jagirs* and those of Khushal Singh's only surviving son Bhagwan Singh, were confirmed. The British assigned Tej Singh the task of disbanding the Khalsa army. In 1861, the scattered *jagirs* of Tej Singh were consolidated and a large tract of land in Batala given to him in lieu of other lands. He was also given the title of Raja of Batala, appointed honorary magistrate

and given the powers of a deputy commissioner.

Raja Tej Singh, looked after the education and upbringing of Dyal Singh. The latter lived with his guardian Tej Singh in Batala in winter and Kangra in summer. Tej Singh's adopted successor Harbans Singh, who was older than Dyal Singh by two years, was his playmate.

Even though Tej Singh had joined the Khalsa fraternity, the atmosphere in his home was that of a Gaur Brahmin family. Consequently, Dyal Singh was familiar with rituals and traditions of Hinduism. No other person in the province than Tej Singh could have told Dyal Singh more about the history of Ranjit Singh's times, the rise and fall of the Sikh kingdom and the important personae. So deep were the etchings of the events of Sikh history as they took place, on Dyal Singh's impressionable mind that he could recount at great length these events connected with the break-up of the Sikh kingdom, in the minutest of details. According to his latter-day friend Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni: "As one heard him go on with the narrative, one would feel as if one was actually present while the thrilling incidents that he was describing were taking place before one's own eyes. How he described even the details of inner apartments of houses where these incidents took place was also remarkable. Once or twice I myself verified the correctness of his description by going to Dhian Singh's *haveli* and examining the spots where he told me certain incidents had taken place. In fact, his description of various scenes and incidents were so graphic and lifelike that I have often chided myself for not jotting down notes to be expanded later at home".

That he was endowed with a gift of narration is corroborated by Sahni when he says that "next only to his vivid perception of the doings of the chief actors of post-Ranjit Singh history was Dyal Singh's grasp of Christian religious history. "There must be very few among Indian Christians who could describe the various scenes connected with the life of Christ and his disciples so vividly, and with such interesting wealth of detail of the incidents, as he could do." He learnt about Christianity when he joined the Mission School at Amritsar. Here the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, who, under the rules, had to oversee the arrangements for the upbringing and education of the boy under the court of ward, also kept an eye on the young man's development. Col. Charles Henry Tilson Marshall, an ICS officer, was posted to Amritsar. Fresh from England, he



looked forward to an exciting and adventurous career in the newly created Frontier Province of the British Indian Empire. He met young Dyal Singh, then a “handsome, healthy, well-built boy whose imagination was full of the glories of his father and grandfather, and to whose active mind new worlds were being revealed by Western instruction.” Marshall was satisfied with the ward’s progress.

Whoever else met Dyal Singh was all praise for “the tall, graceful figure of clear-cut features and wheatish complexion, with delicate and winsome manners.” The fact that he had lost his parents at a tender age, and was growing up among strangers, did not apparently affect his geniality and amiable disposition.

Dyal Singh’s school teachers instilled in him a sense of enquiry and a love of knowledge about everything around him. The systematic education they imparted him shaped a capacity for independent thinking and a broad vision. Mathematics was not his favourite subject, but he made good progress in English, Persian and Hindi\*. He had a special taste for literature. Tej Singh’s successor, Harbans Singh, was later to praise Dyal Singh’s eagerness for knowledge, his diligence and his intelligence. Dyal Singh also received training in games, riding and athletic activities. He married the daughter of Sardar Sher Singh of Ambala.

In October, 1864, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India held a durbar in Lahore. Over 600 princes and noblemen attended it. Dyal Singh’s position in the warrants of precedence was No. 52. His uncle Ranjodh Singh was allotted position No. 109. Dyal Singh presented a *nazr* of Rs 1,000 and was given a *khillat* of Rs 1,250. It was symbolic of the position of the family of Dyal Singh that, at the age of 17, he was among the important donors to the Gymkhana Club in Lahore.

When Dyal Singh was twenty-one, Government considered him fully competent to administer his vast estates. The court of wards released Lehna Singh’s estate, and Dyal Singh was installed formally as the head of the family and a chief of Shergil clan. In recognition of the importance of his family and his social status, Dyal Singh was also appointed an honorary magistrate of Amritsar. The young Sirdar took deep interest in

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\* This is mentioned by Lepel H. Griffin who wrote the first book, in 1865, on Punjab Chiefs. He did not use the word “Urdu”, which gained currency only afterwards.



his inheritance, mastered the details of property and started living the life of a nobleman in a society which consisted of Sardars, Mahajans and the lower classes. Some of those belonging to the aristocratic classes had got adjusted to the new times, and accepted such posts as those of extra-assistant commissioners, police inspectors and risaldars. However, a majority of them with income from *jagirs* gave themselves up to a life of ease, luxury and self-indulgence.

Being a part of the society of Sardars who sought relaxation in the form of recreations common among the aristocracy of the time, it was but natural that Dyal Singh too should extend patronage to poets, artists and sports. He himself wrote poetry, and his pen name was "Mashriq"\*.

What made Dyal Singh different from others of the old aristocratic class was that, unlike them, he did not squander the estate he had inherited. With his unusual acumen, and the help of efficient managers, he not only well managed his properties but also added to his assets.

Also, unlike other adults of his class of those times, he devoted a good deal of his time to the study of standard works of literature. He also read books on political, social and moral advancement, philosophy and theology, and kept in close touch with the progress of thought in the country and abroad.

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\* It has not been possible to lay hands on his "*Kalaam*". The India Office Library and Records has, in its catalogue, entries of *Barah Mah* and three *Sihaarfis* written by Dyal Singh. These compositions, it is said, are a proof that he wrote poetry.

## New Horizons

**T**HE SEVENTH DECADE of the nineteenth century was a memorable epoch in the history of the world in general, of Europe and of India in particular. Great teachers, such as Ruskin, Carlyle, James Stuart Mill and Darwin, with their ideas and theories, had profusely shaken the people's ideas, dogmas. Mazzini, Garibaldi and Victor Hugo had broadened the horizons and helped bring about a cosmopolitan outlook. Liberalism had come to the fore. Gladstone, Bright and Cobden had breathed a new spirit into the political life of England. Across the Atlantic, slavery had been abolished. In Europe, Germany had defeated France. Under the Treaty of Berlin, the European powers had parcelled out the world.

Seeley, in the *Expansion of the British Empire*, had enunciated his doctrine of Divide and Rule, whose operation could be seen from the foundation of the Aligarh Muslim University and the rise of forces that led to the emergence of the Muslim League.

Disraeli, who had sent Lytton to India with instructions to fight the Russian menace, had bought shares in the Suez Canal venture and declared Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. On January 1, 1877, Lytton organised a magnificent durbar in Delhi. It is ironical that the same Lord Lytton who left the shores of India, in April 1880, had unwittingly activated the nationalist forces that had been slumbering for long. Two of his unpopular measures, e.g. Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act, had strengthened the feeble currents of nationalism and public opinion. The Brahmo Samaj and several other organisations were motivating the people. So was the Arya Samaj in the Punjab.

The quarter of a century following the annexation of the province had seen its rapid development in diverse fields. The British had perceived the threat of Russian expansionism from across the northern border of the



province. To meet this threat, they had built up a chain of strong fortifications and wished to develop the province at a pace much faster than they had done in the rest of India. Land revenue was reduced. Until the annexation, all canals in the Punjab, excepting the Hasli canal, were inundation canals, especially in the south-western districts. In 1849, work on merging the Hasli canal with the Bari Doab system was taken up to provide employment to the disbanded soldiers of the Khalsa army. Since the inundation canals had been dug up a long time ago, there had been much silt. The new administration decided that these canals be dug up and their silt cleared.

There was also to be a modernisation programme. The Roorkee Engineering College founded in 1847, to train officers of the Royal Corps of Engineers, was a great institution unparalleled in the whole of Asia. It provided the know-how, and the Punjab took advantage of its expertise.

Work on the Bari Doab canal which was to take off from the left bank of the Ravi and water the districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur and Amritsar, was started in 1850 and its entire 237 miles completed by 1862. Its distributary channels totalled 692 miles. The Sirhind canal, from the Satluj, irrigated lands right up to the borders of Rajasthan and parts of Bikaner and the state of Bahawalpur now in Pakistan. It irrigated 7,00,000 acres.

The Western Yamuna canal, which takes off from the west bank of the Yamuna to irrigate Delhi, Rohtak, Hissar, Ambala, Karnal and parts of Patiala and Jind districts, was remodelled between 1870 and 1882. Through its 259 distributary channels it irrigated nearly 6,00,000 acres.

*Takavi* loans were given liberally at low rates of interest to the farmers to help them dig wells for irrigation. The number of wells rose from 1.46 lakh in 1849 to 3.17 lakh within the next fifty years. These accounted for the irrigation of 43 lakh acres out of 93.6 lakh acres. The well irrigation encouraged cash crops, e.g. tobacco, cotton and chillie. Development of agriculture and irrigation was only one part of the story. The other part related to the transportation of farm produce from the interior to the *mandis* and big towns. Such new *mandis* and towns as Lyallpur, Sargodha, Okara, Montgomery, Abohar and Fazilka grew rapidly.

Great emphasis was laid on the laying of roads. The Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Peshawar was completed in 1864. Metalled roads



in the Punjab increased from 1036 miles in 1873 to 1916 miles by 1902, unmetalled roads from 19,000 miles in 1873 to 22,000 miles in 1891.

Greater importance was attached to the building of railways. From a mere 32 miles in 1862, the network completed by 1875 rose to 554 miles, and by 1881 to 1056 miles. The railway line between Ambala Cantonment and Ludhiana was opened to traffic on October 12, 1869; that between Jalandhar and Beas on November 15, 1868, and between Ludhiana and Jalandhar a year later; between Patiala and Rajpura and on to Bhatinda by 1889, and between Amritsar and Dinanagar on January 1, 1885. The link between Lahore and Amritsar was completed by 1861, between Lahore and Multan by 1865 and to Muzaffarnagar by 1870.

Of special interest is the fact that four undertakings involved in the building of the railways in Upper India—the Punjab Railway Company, the Sind Railways Company, the Delhi Railway Company and the Indus Flotilla Company—all the four under the same management in London—were amalgamated in 1870 into one company called the “Punjab, Sind and Delhi Railway Company.”

By 1872, one goods train ran daily between Lahore and Ghaziabad. Till 1876, when Karachi-Kotri line was connected with Multan, one travelled from Multan by steamers of the Indus Flotilla Company to the bank of the Indus opposite Hyderabad. It took about 12 days to travel from Multan to Karachi by steamer, the upstream taking 25 days. With the completion of Multan-Kotri-Karachi link, Punjab was to be connected with Karachi port.

Ever since Dyal Singh's contact with English teachers at School, and his study of English language and literature, he had a great desire to visit England, the home of the rulers. Having taken stock of the situation at home and settled his property affairs, he thought of completing his education by a visit to England and the continent of Europe.\*

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\* Some 20 years later, Dyal Singh welcomed the decision by Umrao Singh, another Sardar from Majitha—“who had received English education”—to visit the U.K. with the “sole object of taking part in the advancement of the age”; and more so because he was going abroad along with his wife (“the first lady since Rani Jindan”) with a view to giving a finish to her education and to improve and ennoble her mind. This Umrao Singh, who later married a Hungarian lady, was the father of the famous artist Amrita Sher-Gill.

It was very uncommon thing in those days for a young man in northern India to go to England. Any plan to cross the seas and travel to Europe met with serious opposition. A few people from Bengal, which had a long association with the British rule, had crossed the seas, but this was considered “irreligious”, and those who did so were declared outcastes, to be “purified” on their return before being readmitted to the fold of society.

There are no letters, no diaries, no notes or any other documents of any type that could throw light on Dyal Singh's journey across the seas. However, we know of a journey about this time by three Bengali youth of about the same age group as Dyal Singh. They left Calcutta for England to sit for the Indian Civil Service competitive examination. The three young men who made a mark in the political, literary and administrative fields of Indian history, were Surendranath Banerjea, Romesh Chunder Dutt and Biharilal Gupta. With the first two, Dyal Singh was later to come into close contact. The three Bengalis who succeeded in the open competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service, had to plan to go abroad in great secrecy.

Writes Surendranath Banerjea's biographer:

“Circumstances for an Indian's visit to England in those days were far from favourable, psychologically, socially and materially. A sea voyage was a taboo to the average Indian, and orthodox reaction to it was by no means hospitable. The grim prospect of social ostracism was always there for an England-returnee. The mere prospect of a long sea voyage to a far and unknown land was also frightening for the average Indian. All these prejudices and obstacles had to be got over. Surendranath's father was positively helpful, yet preparations for the journey had to be hatched in secret and the news of the contemplated visit to England was broken to Surendranath's mother almost on the eve of his departure when, on hearing it, she fainted.”

R.C. Dutt had, we are told by his biographer, “to draw up the plan to sail secretly. He and Biharilal Gupta had to run away from home under the cover of night. The berths were booked in the name of Surendranath Banerjea and ‘two friends’.”

During his voyage R.C. Dutt wrote to his brother, who was the only one told of the plans: “The least hint about our plans would have effectually



stopped our departure, our guardians would never have consented to our crossing the seas; our wisest friends would have considered it madness to venture on an impossible undertaking.”

Even twenty years later, opposition to travel abroad continued to be strong. When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi accepted the suggestion to go abroad, his people were horrified. His mother gave her consent only after his promise not to touch meat, wine and women. As none of the caste had ever gone abroad, a general meeting of the caste people was called and Mohandas summoned to appear before them.

“In the opinion of the caste, your proposal to go to England is not proper,” they warned him.

“I cannot alter my resolve to go to England”, he replied firmly. “I think the caste should not interfere in the matter.”

“This boy shall be treated as an outcaste from today. Whoever helps him or goes to see him off at the dock, shall be punishable with a fine of one rupee and four annas” was the solemn verdict of the caste people.

Position in the north, or in the Punjab, which had a much shorter association with England than eastern or western India, was no better. Members of the Punjab aristocracy felt bitter that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's youngest son and successor Duleep Singh had gone to England, where the Queen, now the proud possessor of the Koh-i-Noor, had seen to it that Duleep Singh was comfortably settled in a big estate in Elvedon in Suffolk. Now a Christian, he had been brainwashed. He had no love for his people, for his country or for his religion. It was known that he had brought the remains of his mother Rani Jindan to India and, on his way back to England, had married Bamba Muller, the daughter of a German merchant and an Ethiopian Christian woman. They were sorry for Duleep Singh and did not wish the son of Lehna Singh also to go the way of Duleep Singh.

Therefore, when Dyal Singh's intention to travel to England and Europe became known to his wife and his relations they were shocked and horrified at the prospect of the only son and scion of the family of Lehna Singh undertaking a trip across the seas. They were apprehensive that he too might eat and drink with the Christians. However, Dyal Singh, who was a man of determination, refused to be dissuaded. He disregarded all opposition to his planned visit abroad by his wife, family members, other



sections of the landed aristocracy or leaders of religion in Amritsar and went ahead with his plans to fulfil his desire to know at first hand how the British rulers lived and thought.

Before embarking on his journey from Amritsar to Muzaffargarh near the Indus, he resigned his honorary magistrateship of Amritsar and left detailed instructions in regard to the management of his estates. He is believed to have drawn up a will also. He arrived in Karachi,\* a fast developing port.

To quote the experiences of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, who had travelled from western India to Suez via Aden: "The ship reached Suez. The canal was still in the process of excavation. On to Cairo by train. ... From the cursory view of Egypt, which I got, I was astonished. Its land seems to be splendidly manured, and the canals, with their branches are innumerable. As far as I could see there was not a single field unwatered by canal. The science of canal making is hereditary among the Egyptians. On all sides were sluices for regulating the water supply. Where the land to be irrigated is higher than the canal, a wheel with buckets is made, which, driven by a donkey, pony or bullock, carries the water up and throws it into a channel. In India our practice is to throw the water up in baskets carried by two men. The Egyptian method would certainly be an improvement on it. At one place I saw a well being worked, the water being raised by a Persian wheel similar to, but lighter and less expensive than, those in use in the Karnal and Panipat districts. I saw ploughing going on like ours in India."

And here is an account by a British civilian travelling from the United Kingdom to India by the same route:

"We picked up the steamer at Marseilles... A train journey awaited us in Egypt from Alexandria to Cairo and again from Cairo to Suez. The Suez canal was not then open, and indeed was not used by the P. & O. Company for mail traffic until some years after the occupation of Egypt in 1882... The P. & O. boats were then very unlike the comfortable floating hotels they have since become... The boats did very well when they made their nine knots an hour. We carried all our livestock on board,

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\* It is the author's surmise that Dyal Singh travelled by ship from Karachi to Qaser in Egypt, onwards by camel to Luxor, and then down the Nile by boat to Cairo. Onwards to Alexandria and then across the Mediterranean to Marseilles on way to London.

and not for one moment could we escape the noise and smells of the kettle pens and hen-coops... The hottest part of the deck, where little demons with scarlet cummerbunds and puggeries ran about with small balls of fire, was the portion of the ship set aside for smokers' use. Wine bills troubled us not; bear and wine, except champagne, were *compris*. Ice, however, was unknown, though the ice was handed round as a treat on Sundays. We left London on 23rd of September, 1867... and the pilot boarded us at the Sandheads in the mouth of the Hooghly on 29th of October... There were no jetties in 1867, and we were ignominiously carried on shore on the backs of coolies who waded through soft and most disgusting mud.”

Says R.C. Dutt's biographer: “The contact with Europe and the impressions he gained there during these years gave to his earnest and patriotic mind, as it did to several others in succeeding generations, a measure of the backwardness of the country and instilled in him the desire to see his country progress on similar lines. He saw representative institutions flourish in England, and he naturally asked himself why they should not flourish in India. He saw Europe forging ahead in industry and commerce, and he yearned for similar progress in India.”

R.C. Dutt found time to travel in England and Europe and observe closely the countries he visited. “As we become more familiar with Europe and with England”, he wrote to his brother in 1871, “we shall adopt some great virtues and some noble institutions which are conspicuous in Europe in the present day, and we need much. Our children's children will live to see the day when India will take her place among the nations of the earth in manufacturing industry and commercial enterprise, in representative institutions and real social advancement. May that day dawn early for India.”

Surendranath's admiration for the British democratic institutions also became deep. “To England”, he wrote, “we look for inspiration and guidance...we have been fed upon the strong food of English constitutional freedom. We have been taught to admire the eloquence and genius of the great masters of English political philosophy.”

While R.C. Dutt and Surendranath Banerjea have left behind a good deal of written material, Dyal Singh hasn't. We have, therefore, quoted the two Bengali personages, belonging to Dyal Singh's generation only



to show what ideas moved the people at that time in the nation's history. Their outlook had a good deal of commonality. Dyal Singh was possibly the most important Sikh nobleman of his time to visit England. During his two years' sojourn abroad, he spent a good deal of the time in England. He also visited some countries of Europe where, in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, a new wave of nationalism was sweeping. He felt the new thoughts pulsating in the nations of Europe. Tall, well-built, with aristocratic bearing and elegant Indian costume, he attracted the people's attention. He admired British character and British institutions and was never tired of praising British hospitality, enterprise, courtesy and highmindedness. He thought the British were the most powerful and the richest nation in the world, and there was no other nation in Europe that could be compared with Britain.

He came into contact with persons of high rank and scholarship, and spent quite some time in discussing with prominent people, especially those of the liberal and progressive ideas, the problems of India's backwardness and ignorance.

He developed an admiration for the Western system of education, and the freedom of the Press. According to one historian, the British islands "blew into the mind of the imaginative and impulsive young man an invigorating and inspiring breeze, fragrant with the sweet perfumes of patriotism, rejuvenation and glamorous dreamlands."

The sojourn in Europe broadened his outlook. He saw his own country in a new light and his patriotism acquired a new fervour and an added urgency. Calm reflection on the causes of India's appalling backwardness helped him draw up in his mind a list of measures for their upliftment.

There was nothing that he hated more than hypocrisy and double talk, or saying one thing and doing another. As example is better than precept he had done away with the external symbols of Sikhism. He had cut his hair and taken to smoking. He also decided to rise above provincial or regional loyalties or prejudices of caste and creed. The completion of the 750 mile-long railway line between Lahore and Karachi had opened up new opportunities to the people of the Punjab, who now got an outlet to the Arabian Sea and the markets in Europe. Punjab wheat was now being exported to England through the port at Karachi. And when Europe's



supplies of American cotton got disrupted by the American Civil War, Punjab cotton found markets in Europe. Geographically, the areas of Punjab and Sindh are contiguous. Ethnologically too the people of Sindh are no different from those of the Punjab. The Hindus of Sindh have been followers of Guru Nanak. The contact between the two was ancient. As we have seen above, once Ranjit Singh had his eyes on Sindh and had deputed Dyal Singh's uncle, Gujar Singh, to go to Calcutta to fathom the intentions of the British in regard to Shikarpur in Sindh. Also Lehna Singh was asked to go to Sindh to receive Alexander Burnes. The British had forestalled any move by Ranjit Singh. Later too, the relations between the Punjab and Sindh were considered to be so close that more than once the British mooted the idea of amalgamating the two provinces. The Sindhis, who were fiercely opposed to being ruled from Lahore, preferred to be a part of the Bombay presidency instead. However, trade knows no geographical barriers. In Amritsar, there was a flourishing colony of Sindhi merchants from Shikarpur. And there were Punjabi merchants in Shikarpur and Karachi. Dyal Singh was not a merchant, but he was aware of the opportunities arising out of the railway link between Lahore and Karachi. There are reasons to believe that he visited the port town often for relaxation. He acquired a huge mansion at 12, Victoria Street, Karachi. His links with the Sindhi followers of Brahmo Samaj would have been an additional reason.

Back in Amritsar, he lived like a prince. His hospitality extended to building separate guest quarters. With advanced ideas and Europeanised tastes, he did not care to attend caste dinners. In addition to Hindu cooks he also engaged cooks and servants who were Muslims, Christians or even of low castes. He ate on the same table with Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others. The Sikh aristocracy was horrified. The orthodox and conservative Sikh relations said, he had become a *Kirani* (Christian). He could not care less.

A few months after his return from Europe, Dyal Singh's wife, to whom he was deeply attached, passed away, childless. He withdrew from many activities and was in virtual retirement from public life. To drown his sorrows he took to drinking.

While some people in Amritsar talked of his having left the faith of the ancestors, others spread malicious stories about his living and his

morals.

Pressure was brought on him to get married again. He yielded. The second wife was Bhagwan Kaur, also “of a respectable and orthodox Hindu Jat Sikh family”. When Bhagwan Kaur's parents said the Sirdar was not a good Sikh, they were told he would get reformed. However, something seems to have gone wrong. For, Dyal Singh absented himself from the community feast organised on the occasion for the local Sikhs and some of the brotherhood. Afterwards too, Dyal Singh and Bhagwan Kaur seem to have lived separately for long periods, especially after the Sirdar decided to reside more in Lahore than in Amritsar.

The city of Amritsar was too small a place for Dyal Singh to pursue the vocation that he had opted for, or to launch the new ventures that he had thought of or to take part in the religious and socio-political movements, of the time, or in the intellectual pursuits that he envisaged for the improvement of his own self and the community of India at large. While Amritsar was the cultural and trade centre of the Punjab, and the seat of his ancestors, the province's administrative headquarters was Lahore, just about thirty miles away, or an hour's run by train.

For the great builder-to-be Dyal Singh, there was no problem in residing in Lahore. He had already left the baronical mansion at Majitha to live in the impressive *haveli* at Amritsar. Now he moved to Lahore. However, he kept two establishments, one at Amritsar, and the other at Lahore. While some contemporary reports or accounts refer to Dyal Singh as the *jagirdar* of Amritsar, others describe him as the Rais of Lahore. He held a position of eminence at both the places. One of his closest friends, Pratul Chandra Chatterjee has mentioned that he had first seen Dyal Singh at the fancy fair in Lahore in 1874, when he had come down from Amritsar, but had met him again at Lahore after the Sirdar had returned from his sojourn in England and Europe. In 1877, we find Surendranath Banerjea being received by Dyal Singh in Amritsar and the same year Swami Dayanand meeting Dyal Singh who, to quote the biographer Lekh Ram, was “the famous Rais” of Lahore. Arrangements for the Swami's stay in Amritsar were made by the Sirdar. Brahmo Samaj historian Sivanath Sastri met him at Amritsar in 1879. While the *Gazetteer* for 1883-84 said that the Sirdar “resided at Lahore,” the *Gazetteer* for 1892-93 recorded that “since his return from England he has lived entirely



in Lahore and is rarely seen in Amritsar or Majitha''.

It seems fairly certain, therefore, that by 1877 or 1878 Dyal Singh was living for long periods in Lahore making money through trade in jewellery and precious stones, building houses, acquiring landed property, drawing up plans for starting an English newspaper in Lahore, playing an important role in the promotion of education on Western lines through the medium of English, and propagation of Brahmo Samaj.

## In Quest of Truth

**B**ORN IN THE holiest of the holy cities of India, Kashi, Dyal Singh was the scion of a family which had been in charge of the affairs of the Golden Temple in Amritsar for more than three decades. Back in the Punjab, at the tender age of six, this orphan had his upbringing in the household of Tej Singh whose family followed the Brahminical rituals. He studied the *Gita* with the help of a Brahmin from Ferozepur. A scholar of Persian, he had friends who helped him with a study of the *Quran*. Later he was educated in the Christian Mission School at Amritsar and so deep was the impression created by Christianity that at one stage he thought of embracing the Christian faith.

In 1871 he published a book entitled, *Naghma-i-Tamboori*. In the introduction to the book, he says: "After prayers to the Eternal one, who has no beginning and no end, I, Dyal Singh, submit to the readers that recently there was a theological debate through an exchange of letters, between pastor Maulvi Imamuddin\* and Maulvi Sayyid Ali Mohammed, a renowned commentator of Islamic theology in Lucknow. For the good of the people in general, I have edited this correspondence. The originals, after careful scrutiny, have been kept in the Mission at Amritsar so that anyone desirous of it, could compare them. As suggested by Maulvi Abul Hassan, this tract has been captioned *Naghma-i-Tamboori* because, he has said that, Imamuddin's conversion from Sunni faith to Christianity is more like his making his own *tamboora*, the musical instrument, the notes of which are not really in consonance.

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\* The Sunni convert to Christianity was presented by the missionaries (as a show-piece) to the Prince of Wales when the latter visited Lahore in 1876.



“One’s actions should be such that  
Even the enemy would concur;  
He may not do so on one’s face,  
But do so in his heart of hearts.”

According to one of his contemporaries; “It was surprising to see a rich nobleman holding forth eloquently, and in excellent English or Urdu, on the early schismatic tendencies in Islam and the forces that gave them birth.”

When Swami Vivekananda visited Lahore after his visit to the United States, Dyal Singh held long discussions with him. Indeed, Dyal Singh loved a discussion on religious, theological and metaphysical issues with knowledgeable persons belonging to different faiths.

A new faith that had emerged in India in the nineteenth century, a faith that had adopted some of the features of Christianity too, was the Brahmo Samaj which could be traced to Raja Rammohun Roy’s Brahmo Sabha, later given a new lease of life by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore who gave it the name of Brahmo Samaj.

Dyal Singh’s craving for knowledge relating to religion attracted him in the early 1870s to a Brahmo living in the Lohgarh area of Amritsar. The area of Lohgarh marked the terminal point of the road from Dyal Singh’s ancestral village Majitha.

The visits of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen to the Punjab in the 1850s and 1860s respectively and the presence of Bengali lawyers, teachers and civil servants in large numbers, most of whom were Brahmos, had made the Brahmo Samaj an accepted faith among the small elite in the Punjab. In 1874, Dyal Singh delivered a lecture which was printed under the title *Rahat-i-Haqiqi*\*, in Amritsar in 1875, at a time when he was in England.

While Dayal Singh was in England and Europe, another new faith had emerged in India. This was the Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Bombay in 1875. Impressed by the Swami’s lectures, two Sikh Sardars, Vikram Singh and Suchet Singh, extended to him an invitation to visit the Punjab. The Swami agreed, but he was able to visit the Punjab only after the first Unity Conference which he had

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\* A copy of this pamphlet is mentioned in the catalogue of the India Office Library and Records, London.

called in Delhi in January 1877, at the time of the Delhi Durbar of Lord Lytton. His aim was to create a common platform for the people of different faiths in the country. Those who attended the conference included such eminent people as Keshub Chunder Sen of the Brahmo Samaj, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Harishchandra Chintamani and Munshi Inder Mani. Participants from the Punjab included Navin Chunder Roy and Kanhyalal Alakhdhari. This meeting called by Dayanand Saraswati was a failure. However, this was followed by more invitations from the Punjab. Among those who had extended the invitation now were Brahmos. The Swami, accompanied by Alakhdhari, reached Ludhiana on March 31, 1877. On April 19, he reached Lahore. Here he was extended a warm welcome. The Brahmos played host. They had hoped that his visit would help them in the propagation of their own teachings. But Dayanand spoke on his pet theme, the infallibility of the *Vedas*. After two lectures by him, the Brahmos were disappointed, expressed their unhappiness and withdrew their support. The Swami then shifted to the house of Rashid Khan, where the Lahore Arya Samaj was founded on June 24, 1877. Dyal Singh, described by Dayanand's biographer Lekh Ram as a well-known Rais of Lahore, met the Swami more than once (two or three times, according to his statement to Ruchi Ram Sahni) and had discussions with the Swami. When it came to the theme of infallibility of the *Vedas*, Dyal Singh could not agree with the Swami's viewpoint. Dayanand told him that, in a debate, one should let the other party also speak and stick to the time frame decided upon. Once Dayanand told him that he was still young and that he might call his mentor Keshub Chunder Sen from Calcutta or accompany him to Calcutta when the subject could be discussed at length. At one stage Dyal Singh walked out in a huff.

However, it is significant that when Dyal Singh came to know that the Swami would like to visit Amritsar, he himself rented a house for the Swami's stay in Amritsar. And it was there that the Swami established the Arya Samaj of Amritsar on August 12, the secretary appointed being Sardar Narain Singh, a practising lawyer of the city.

Although Dyal Singh had great respect for Swamiji, yet he did not join the Arya Samaj, because the only faith to which Dyal Singh had instinctively felt attracted was the Brahmo Samaj. What inspired him was its liberal theology and the freedom that it gave to its members in social



matters, a freedom that enabled its members to break the shackles of restrictions of caste and other social evils.

After Dyal Singh started living in Lahore he stayed in Amritsar only briefly. A majority of his close friends here were Bengali lawyers, educationists, civil servants or social workers. The family's links with Bengal were a few decades old. We have seen earlier that Lehna Singh's brother Gujar Singh had been sent to Calcutta by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Lehna Singh had himself lived in Kashi and was living in Calcutta when the first Anglo-Sikh War broke out. According to Lepel Griffin, he had acquired an estate in Shahpur in Bengal. It is quite likely that some of the servants in Lehna Singh's household in Banaras were Bengalis who might, after Lehna Singh's death, might have come to Majitha. In any case, Dyal Singh's family could be presumed to be familiar with Bengalis and Bengali language. His closest friend was Jogendra Chandra Bose, a lawyer at the Chief Court at Lahore. Another close lawyer friend was Sir Pratul Chandra Chatterjee, who later recalled that he had first seen the Sirdar at a fair in Lawrence Gardens in 1874 "after hearing of his fame as a gentleman, and as a philanthropist." Pratul Chandra later became the second Indian judge of the Chief Court, the first Indian being a Kashmiri Pandit who died within a few months of his appointment. Dyal Singh had great faith in his judgement and sought his advice in diverse matters. Yet another friend was Avinash Chandra Majumdar, an employee of the Railways, and known for his contribution as a social worker who later set up a charitable homoeopathic dispensary and, subsequently, the tuberculosis sanatorium at Dharampur between Kalka and Simla on lands donated by the Maharaja of Patiala. There were other Bengali friends too, Brahmos and Christians. He was so friendly to the Bengalis that at one stage he thought of marrying a Bengali Brahmo lady. Even negotiations were carried on, but she preferred another suitor.

Dyal Singh played host to most of the Brahmo leaders and preachers who visited Lahore, often on their way to Sindh or Bombay. Among them were Surendranath Banerjea and Anand Mohan Bose, the first Indian wrangler from Cambridge. Those who were not his guests stayed with Bengali members of staff of *The Tribune*. Sivanath Sastri has told us that when he once visited the Punjab, Dyal Singh welcomed him and had long discussions. When he was leaving for Sindh, Dyal Singh gave some

money to Lall Singh, a convert to Brahmoism, and sent him to accompany the great Sastri. Nagendranath Gupta, who later became the editor of his newspaper, had earlier visited Lahore and stayed with Sitalakanta Chatterjee with whom also stayed Anand Mohan Bose. Apart from Sivanath Sastri, another great Brahmo preacher who stayed with Dyal Singh was the Reverend Brother Protap Chunder Mozumdar. Once Dyal Singh specially invited him to Lahore. The Rev. Brother stayed with him for quite a few weeks. They discussed the feasibility of a theistic mission in the Punjab.

The teachings of Raja Rammohun Roy and the fundamentals of Brahmo Samaj appealed to Dyal Singh so much that he took part in the activities of several bodies connected with the Samaj.

“In February 1877”, says the Brahmo Samaj secretary Pandit S.N. Agnihotri, “we established a society called the Samadarsi Sabha. It consisted of 14 members, most of them college students. The object of the Sabha was to hold weekly meetings and discuss all sorts of scientific, moral and social subjects, and also to promote confraternity amongst the members. The Sabha received many visitors during its meetings, Pandit Sivanath Sastri and Babu Amrito Lal. Of the 26 donors in second half of 1878, giving Rs 556/12/6, Sirdar Dyal Singh donated Rs 150, the highest donation (or more than one-fourth). Deeply interested in the propagation of the Brahmo faith, he translated some of the important works of Rammohun Roy and two of the lectures of Keshub Chunder Sen into Urdu, one of these entitled ‘Religion is love’ and the other ‘Incarnations’.”

In May 1878, some followers, of Keshub Chunder Sen, including Sivanath Sastri, left the Brahmo Samaj of India because they could not agree with Sen’s concept of *Adesha* or Divine Command and also because Sen’s eldest daughter had been married to the prince of Cooch Behar in violation of the Native Marriage Act’s provisions drawn up at the instance of Sen’s Brahmo Samaj. They now founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, which adopted a democratic constitution based on universal adult franchise, and aimed at establishing a worldwide republic. Dyal Singh, who did not like the doctrine of *Adesha* or Divine Command, sided with the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. In his home city Amritsar, it seems there was no regular Samaj till February 23, 1879, when a Sadharan



Brahmo Samaj was organised with six members, including Dyal Singh Majithia, Lall Singh, Kripashankar, Acharya Sib Chunder Sen, Suraj Kumar Sen and C.K. Sain. Lall Singh, according to the annual report, “was originally a member of the Arya Samaj, but, by continuous discussions he held with us and our able Sirdar Dyal Singh, he at last turned to our side and joined the Samaj.”

On August 3, 1879, Sirdar Dyal Singh was requested by Pandit Sivanath Sastri to raise a subscription for the Mandir of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The target set was Rs 3,000. Subscriptions raised, totalled two thousand, Dyal Singh subscribing one thousand. “The Samaj is much indebted to him for his exertions.”

The Brahmo Samaj’s annual report for 1879 says that “the names of Sirdar Dyal Singh of Amritsar and Mr Usuf Shah, a respectable gentleman of that city, deserve special mention. It was chiefly through their exertions that about Rs 3,000 were collected from the city.”

October 30, 1879, saw the establishment of Sat Sangat which arranged discussions every Thursday. Its members included Mr S.C. Sen, Mr Murlidhar, secretary, Babu Narayan Singh, pleader, Mr Mahatab Rai, Mr Sain Das, Mr Kripashankar with Sirdar Dyal Singh in the Chair.

An idea of the nature of discussions would be had from secretary S.N. Agnihotri’s report, wherein he says: “During the year under review, I delivered four lectures in the Shiksha Sabha hall of Lahore. Three of the lectures were on the improvement of our females and the last one on the moral atmosphere of India. All these lectures were attended by a large audience. A substance of the first three lectures was serially published in three different issues of the *Anjuman Akhbar*, the recognised organ of the well-known Anjuman-i-Punjab.”

“On my return journey from Multan,” he added, “I paid a visit to Amritsar and delivered a lecture there on National Reformation. The next day I conducted divine service at the house of Babu Sib Chunder Sen, who has, by kind and earnest help of our respected brother Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia, established a prayer meeting hall there and which, I am happy to report, is doing well.” The report also mentioned the conversion to Brahmo Samaj of a Mohammedan youth named Munshi Mokham Din.

Dyal Singh took a good deal of interest in the Samaj’s “society for the diffusion of theism”, which was responsible for the publication of

pamphlets. "The total number of books, both original and translations, published (till 1879) is 35". This included his own *Khuda Mohabbat Hai Ya Qahar* in Urdu. It showed better than any of his other writings, a strong tinge of Christianity found in his thoughts. It sold very well. Another one, also in Urdu, was *Kashif-ul-Ilham*. These and other pamphlets, some of them anonymous, were published at Dyal Singh's own cost and sold at the Brahmo Samaj stalls. The proceeds were always credited to the Brahmo Samaj. "Many requisitions (particularly for hymn books) had to stand over for want of books in the library. As the demand for Brahmo Samaj books is steadily increasing, it is hoped that efforts will be made to issue as many publications next year as we can, with the funds at our disposal, and to dispose off the tracts exceeding 5000 already in hand."

The following year's annual report also carries a note that "Sirdar Dyal Singh has taken in his hand the translation of Theodore Parker's books into Urdu and the publication of some English tracts on Brahmoism."

For the annual general meeting of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj held on January 28, 1880, Dyal Singh travelled to Calcutta. He was elected to the General Committee of the Samaj. The Samaj's journal dated March 4, 1880, carried a report that Sirdar Dyal Singh had also been nominated for the office of the Trustee of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Prayer Hall. A confirmed Brahmo, Dyal Singh was a pillar of strength to the Brahmo Samaj. However, he had independent ideas and could differ on details. For instance he did not approve of some of the Brahmo rituals on such occasions as marriage and death. And when there was a split in the Brahmo Samaj, the Punjab Brahmo Samaj, under his influence, resolved to act independently, and to cooperate with all the Brahmos for the diffusion of theism. Dyal Singh's house in Lahore was a centre of debates amongst the intellectuals of all shades of opinion, eschewing all petty barriers and rituals.

The universalism of Brahmo Samaj, its appreciation of Christian ethics and piety, its intolerance of idol worship, its respect for the prophets of Christianity and Islam might have been considered admirable in other parts of India, but the people in the Punjab did not understand the causes underlying the break-up of Brahmo Samaj into three groups: the Adi Brahmo Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj of India and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Nor did such rituals as *priti bhojan* or community meal, appeal to



the Punjabi mind. And, even though he did not understand the depth of Vedic thought based on scriptures of antiquity, the Punjabi found the militant Arya Samaj more suited to his temperament. The Aryas accepted English language for advancement in future, Hindi for communication with the masses and Sanskrit teaching for moral uplift and the need for science to enhance material progress. The new urban elite—the Khatris, Aroras, Baniyas—were impressed more by the new faith propagated by Swami Dayanand. Also, because of the simplicity of their teachings, use of vernaculars and the propagation of nationalism, the Arya Samaj's ideals appealed more to the people in the Punjab. Hence, defections on a large scale from the Brahmo Samaj to the Arya Samaj in the 1880s. The Brahmo Samaj secretary, Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, has written that he had noticed scores of times that the mere mention of Christ or Mohammed with respect led to the emptying of the Samaj hall of practically everybody except the few Brahmos. The Brahmo movement was decried in the Punjab: a mere public profession of the faith seriously lowered a man in the eyes of the community. In fact, a Brahmo was considered the 'most hateful' of persons. Quite some young men studying at the Government College at Lahore, who had been initially influenced by Brahmo Samaj, become Arya Samajists by the time they left the college. There is a galaxy of such eminent people who became responsible for progress in different fields in the Punjab. These included; Pandit Guru Dutt, Lala Munshi Ram (alias Shradhanand), Lala Lajpat Rai and Lala Sain Das. They were all members of the Brahmo Samaj who had switched over to the Arya Samaj.

Lala Lajpat Rai's biographer, Feroze Chand, narrates how Lalaji was recruited to the Arya Samaj. Under the influence of his father's friend S.N. Agnihotri, Lalaji had read a paper on the life of Rammohun Roy. Later, Sain Das, happened to be present at the Brahmo Samaj meeting when Lajpat Rai was initiated into the Brahmo Samaj at the hands of S.N. Agnihotri. "As he came out of the meeting, Sain Das accosted him and, in a pitying tone, remarked that a worthwhile youngman had been misguided and entrapped." He asked Lajpat Rai to join the Arya Samaj. Lajpat Rai agreed. "Indescribable joy illuminated Lala Sain Das's face." Even some of the Bengalis, like Baboo Bachi Ram Chatterji of the Sukhur Brahmo Samaj and Kali Prosanna Chatterji of *The Tribune*, Lahore, left the Brahmo Samaj to join the Arya Samaj. Indeed, even Agnihotri, a great

preacher of the Brahmo cause, who, like Dyal Singh, was among the trustees of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir in Calcutta, also left the Brahmo Samaj, took *sanyas* and later founded the atheistic Dev Samaj.

Dyal Singh was a staunch follower of Brahmo Samaj. He respected all people who were dedicated to their own faith. Once the legendary Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, who later edited the famous Bengali newspaper *Sandhya* and whose name is mentioned with great respect in books on Bengali journalism, and was spoken highly of by Rabindranath Tagore, was a teacher at the Brahmo Mission School (the Union Academy) in Hyderabad, Sindh. He left Brahmoism and became a Roman Catholic, and ran a journal called *Sophia*. Once he wrote to Nagendranath Gupta about the financial difficulties in which his Roman Catholic journal was. Nagendranath mentioned it to Dyal Singh, and the latter immediately gave him a cheque for *Sophia*.

Dyal Singh's open-mindedness is clear from the fact that S.N. Agnihotri, once a missionary of the Brahmo Samaj and a trustee of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir and now an atheist, approached him after he had turned renegade founder of Dev Samaj, for financial help for his Mandir. Dyal Singh, who had bought a pile of bricks in an auction, gave them to Agnihotri to build his Dev Samaj temple.

The Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore had Dyal Singh's full support because he felt such a college would meet a keenly felt need, even though it was the one factor which later sealed the fate of the Brahmo Samaj in Punjab, and prepared the ground for the propagation of the Arya Samaj movement.

- The tribute that was paid to Swami Dayanand Saraswati by *The Tribune* reflects the esteem in which Dyal Singh held "this extraordinary man who had communicated an electric current of thought through many parts of India." "Swami Dayanand", the paper wrote, "did not learn any foreign language, but he was well acquainted with the doctrines and beliefs that prevailed among other people. Possessing a thorough mastery of the sacred language of his own country—that vast repository of all the higher forms of human knowledge—he was enabled, by his natural intelligence and keen powers of reasoning, to discern the truth and to pick out the corn which had become so hopelessly mixed up with chaff..."

It added: "Hundreds and thousands of men, women and children



listened to Swami Dayanand's stirring eloquence, and, though all of them did not join the Arya Samaj, the effects of his speeches were not entirely lost upon them. It would be a mistake to suppose that the work set on foot by the lamented deceased is confined within the four corners of the Arya Samaj. The principles he preached spread far and wide and created a revolution in men's opinions." Finally, "though we do not concur in all that he said and taught, we must agree that he was a man of great abilities—a genius of higher order, who by the superior power of his intellect rose above the gross superstitions inculcated by his own *Shastras*, and accord him a lofty place among the benefactors of mankind for the various religious and social reforms to which, as necessities of the time, he imparted a strong and enduring stimulus."

Although the Brahmo Samaj could not strike roots in the Punjab, despite the generosity and charity of Dyal Singh, it may be said that he remained committed to this faith so long as he lived. And so deep was his faith in Brahmo Samaj that, even though he was averse to moving out of his house, he made an exception in the case of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj meetings in the Samaj Mandir in Lahore.

## Marching with the Times

**A**FTER HIS RETURN in 1876, from a sojourn in England and Europe, Dyal Singh seems to have lived for longer periods in Lahore than in Amritsar, the city with a long association with the family of Desa Singh and Lehna Singh. With the annexation of the Punjab, the centre of activity had shifted to Lahore; and it was the new headquarters of the province that opened out opportunities to him.

The walled city of Lahore was surrounded in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time by the *chhaonis* or cantonments, of several of his Indian and foreign generals. They and the sons of Ranjit Singh had even occupied some of the tombs and mausoleums and other buildings that existed. Lehna Singh's *chhaoni* was where the British first set up a lunatic asylum and, subsequently, the impressive railway station of Lahore. Other *chhaonis* too were taken over by the British who stationed their own soldiery in barracks. Not long afterwards, the British decided to build a cantonment at Mian Mir, and the road between the Anarkali's tomb and Mian Mir was named the Mall. Along the Mall came up many prestigious buildings. Subsequently, the barracks spread all over were evacuated and the sites auctioned by the garrison engineer who had all the powers. Dyal Singh seized the opportunity and bought lands in prime areas, including the Mall. Even today the prestigious building called the Dyal Singh Mansion with 154 residential units stands there as a landmark. Not far, on the Fane Road near the High Court, he bought plots where he built 54 lawyers' chambers. On a part of the estate today stands the impressive State Bank of Pakistan building. Not far, was also an impressive building called "The Exchange". On other roads also he acquired sites, one in an auction on Nicholson Road, "Lily Cottage" and "Beehive" and others on Empress Road. On Nisbet Road also he bought what continued to be called "bar-



racks" where later came up the Dyal Singh College, Rammohan Roy Hostel and the Dyal Singh Public Library.

In an age when professional architects had not yet come up, Dyal Singh took up the work of designing and building houses in areas occupied by senior civilians. He rented the houses to senior bureaucrats, some of whom later rose to be Lieutenant-Governors of the Punjab, or outside. He not only bought prime sites for buildings in auctions, but also building materials. He thus emerged as a successful dealer in real estate. Dyal Singh also kept an eye on the prices of houses and lands, and judiciously sold some of them with poor yields to reinvest the proceeds in more valuable properties. In his last will and testament too he identified five properties which were not profitable and were to be sold. After the sale of one such property after his death, the proceeds were invested in land off the road to Mian Mir. Here today stands the new campus of the Punjab University.

While landed property was one field in which Dyal Singh made a mark, there was also another activity wherein he made tremendous profits. This was the field of jewellery and diamonds or other precious stones. In this field also Dyal Singh was such a connoisseur that, according to Ruchi Ram Sahni, he could speak for hours on the factors that determined the value of diamonds and other stones. He used his knowledge of the important ruling families of the Punjab to keep an upto date inventory of the assets and liabilities of the old families, so as to strike bargains in regard to the jewellery or diamonds which they may be forced to sell. He was constantly sending out agents to get him the latest information and then sending them, or others who, at his bidding, would strike bargains without mentioning his name. He could outbid experts in the field. According to his friend, Ruchi Ram Sahni, he was an expert in the testing of pearls, rubies, sapphires and other precious stones. He himself saw the Sirdar sorting out the pearls out of necklaces and making small packets which he, at times, would keep in the drawers of his table or his writing desk. "He was a great connoisseur of precious stones of all kinds. He knew the history of most of the jewellery which various Sikh and Hindu families in the Punjab had in their possession. He also knew the value of some of the more important precious stones, and he was constantly sending out agents for securing some of the necklaces and other articles

of jewellery having precious stones at cheap prices. He would often take out the stones and sell them to jewellers. He used to tell us that it was a very profitable trade. And even jewellers, of whom there used to be quite a few at Lahore at the time, acknowledged that he had a true eye for gems. He would sometimes send these articles of jewellery through his own agents without his name being mentioned to reach other families which he thought could afford to buy them to his own advantage. Sometimes the precious articles were sent to Delhi and also to various native states through his agents."

Shrewd as a businessman, Dyal Singh was perhaps the only scion of the well-known families of Ranjit Singh's durbar who earned enormous wealth through deals in landed property, real estate and jewellery. The number of prime properties that Dyal Singh left behind in Lahore numbered twenty-five, in addition to one in Karachi. The value today of the properties is hundreds of crores. Towards the end of the last century, these properties were worth thirty lakh rupees. It was certainly a very impressive achievement.

Equally important was the way Dyal Singh spent what he earned. He lived like a prince, an acknowledged Rais\* of Lahore. While many of the features of his life were those of the aristocracy, there were others that were uncommon to his class. First, the common features. Himself an excellent sitar player, with a sound knowledge of classical music (His proficiency was acknowledged by the masters), he was a patron of fine arts. He financed *mushairas* liberally. He also patronised sports, and was exceedingly fond of wrestling. He gave handsome awards to good wrestlers. He was also an expert kite flyer, and would go to the *maidan* outside the fort and fly kites amidst lots of hangers-on who sold him multi-coloured fancy kites and glass powdered thread (*manja*). He was fond of cock-fighting too. The royal game, or the game of chess, was his great favourite. For this hobby of his, he would be prepared to pay hefty fees. Sometimes, when he heard of some famous player in Delhi, he invited him over to Lahore to come and play against pre-fixed fees which could be quite substantial, or of the order of two hundred rupees a day, a lot of money in those days, when one rupee would fetch 13 seers of wheat *atta*,

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\* The word "Rais" then connoted something more than a mere rich man. The Calcutta newspaper *Reis and Reyit* carried the subtitle Prince and Peasant.



or eight seers of rice, or 16 seers of milk; when for a rupee you could get a seer -and-quarter of ghee, or two seers of mustard oil, or three seers of sugar or 12 seers of *Oordal*, five seers of salt, and when a good bungalow could be rented for twenty rupees a month or a cook or domestic servant hired for eight rupees a month.

Like the hill Rajas, this son of Lehna Singh, the Pahar Badshah (the king of the mountains), had an elaborate ritual in regard to the principal meal of the day, namely the luncheon. As in the case of the ruling houses in the hills, it was a prolonged affair, sometimes lasting a few hours. While meals were being served, would come musicians or even *madaris* or magicians or jugglers to exhibit their arts. They were generously rewarded.

Dyal Singh was a good host. He invited guests which included British or European officials also. But he did not go out to dine with others.

In the evenings, Dyal Singh was fond of going out in a beautiful *phiton* drawn by "kaumat horses." It is, however, significant that he went out in the *phiton* all alone. None of his friends ever saw him accompanied in the *phiton* by someone.

One notable feature of Dyal Singh's lifestyle was the management of his finances. Even though his income varied from month to month, depending upon the deals in landed estates or jewellery, he had laid down a rule for himself that his monthly expenditure would not exceed a certain figure. And he saw to it that this was never crossed. This, obviously, meant a lot of self-control and self-discipline. His friend Ruchi Ram Sahni has said that "he had some vices which were only too common among the members of his class in those days." Another friend Harkishen Lal also said that the "Sirdar enjoyed life". In those days, the people of his class had more than one wife, and one's social status was determined really by the number of extramarital affairs or mistresses or courtesans that one had. Dyal Singh's first wife died soon after he returned to India. He was pressurised by his people to get married to Bhagwan Kaur\*. This marriage had misfired.

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\* Rai Bahadur G.R. Sarni, the veteran journalist of Amritsar, wrote to the author in 1988 that he had seen her and met her. "She did not enjoy a good reputation and had taken to drinking and other vices before she died issueless." All the landed properties of the Sirdar in Amritsar were sold to pay for in litigation by her.

While Bhagwan Kaur stayed in the ancestral house at Amritsar, Dyal Singh stayed mostly in Lahore. In his huge mansion he was attended upon by a large retinue of servants and hangers-on. Not much is known about the Sirdar's personal life except that, at some stage in his life, came a white woman, Lily Catherine, described as an "East Indian Woman", which possibly was the description given to Anglo-Indians or Eurasians those days. She claimed that she was married to him according to Sikh rites. This contention of hers was denied by Rani Bhagwan Kaur and others. However, the fact that Dyal Singh bought a house for her in Karachi, gave her his surname (Gill) and bequeathed to her a tidy sum, show that she played some part in his life. However, he did not make this relationship very public. For, none of the Sirdar's friends have mentioned meeting her in his lifetime. Whether there were some other women is not known. Anyhow, Ruchi Ram Sahni, in a significant statement, has also told us that for lapses in his character, he had a fixed amount, and never exceeded it. While his guardian Tej Singh's cousin had spent a lakh of rupees on festivities in one week's time after his father Khushal Singh's death, Dyal Singh's self-control is indeed remarkable. For charities or for contributions to individuals or institutions also a monthly sum was fixed. His friend Avinash Chandra Majumdar has written that the number of widows and orphans whom he helped was indeed very large. And he never spoke of his donations or made his charities public. Precise in his dealings, he would ask those wanting his help to indicate the amount required. If he agreed, this would be disbursed in the following month; and no requests or entreaties were entertained to advance the date. However, once put down in his book, this was as good as cash payment.

Young men invariably came to Dyal Singh whenever they proposed to start a new venture. And he lent his support to all, irrespective of caste or creed. His friends included people of all schools of thought, not necessarily the wealthy ones, but always men of character. We have the testimony of, among others, Ruchi Ram Sahni, who later became an Assistant Professor of Science in the Government College, Lahore, and subsequently a member of the Trusts set up by Dyal Singh.

"Sirdar Dyal Singh", Ruchi Ram Sahni once wrote, "was a very generous man and he never disappointed any man who stood in need of his advice or help. I had an occasion to call on him once in 1882, to seek



his advice, and I shall not easily forget the kindness and courtesy with which he received me, and spoke to me, only an undergraduate scarcely known to anybody at Lahore, and without any sort of introduction to him. I had gone to him to ask him if he could lend me sufficient money to enable me to go to England for studies there. He had a long talk with me. His attitude was critical, but exceedingly sympathetic. In the end, he told me that I should see Pratul Chandra Chatterjee; that if I could convince him that it would be good for him to lend me the money, he would do so. However, afterwards, I decided not to do anything with borrowed money, which I might find very hard to repay, and, therefore, never saw Pratul Chandra Chatterjee in this connection. It was only after I joined the Government College as Assistant Professor of Science in March 1887 that I made the acquaintance of Sirdar Dyal Singh on terms of friendship... He was indeed a man of very sound common sense and his advice was constantly sought by, and ungrudgingly given to, persons of all grades, classes and communities. I well remember the scions of Punjab aristocracy, the hard-worked men of business as well as the most ordinary people coming to him for advice and guidance in difficult situations. They had the greatest confidence in the probity of his judgement, his honesty of purpose, and regard for the best interests of others. He had a large catholic heart and his charity did not know distinctions of caste, creed or community."

People from all walks of life went to him for help, either for personal or for public causes. None returned empty handed. If the person or leader of deputation approaching him were a Christian, he would refer him to the chaplain attached to the Cathedral at Lahore, or some other Christian friend in whose judgement he had full confidence. In the case of Hindus and Muslims too he had his own friends whose advice he sought before giving the money. Asked to send the amount by cheque, he would always oblige, and there was never an occasion when the messenger sent to collect the cheque would return empty handed. And the cheques were invariably filled in his own handwriting.

He was meticulous in maintaining accounts, and, before a payment was made, he would examine the bills sent to him very minutely. Once the Secretary of the Lahore Brahmo Samaj made a small mistake of about three paise. Not only was the bill returned for correction, but a warning,

written in his own hand, was also conveyed. In this warning Dyal Singh said the mistake was perhaps because the Secretary was an honorary one, and not a paid employee and if a wrong bill was sent to him again he would stop all payments to the Brahmo Samaj, so long as the Secretary remained in position. For the Brahmo Samaj, he had laid down a rule that whatever amount the Secretary of the Lahore Brahmo Samaj and his colleagues collected as subscription to one fund or another in a month, he would donate an amount equal to their total collection.

Dyal Singh was different from the other members of the Sikh aristocracy in the sense that he was a voracious reader of books. When the Punjab Public Library was set up in 1884, he was among the first ten of its members. His personal collection of books consisted of more than one thousand books. Books in which he was interested were on English literature, British and Indian history, philosophy, metaphysics and theology. Books on comparative theology were always seen on his table or desk, and he recommended or gave them to friends to read. His personal predilections were in favour of theism, as preached by the Brahmo Samaj. Lectures or travel diaries of Keshub Chunder Sen were his favourite. According to his friends, Dyal Singh was very well-informed on many topics; indeed he was so well-informed that it might excite the emulation of aspiring graduates. And, although Dyal Singh was no great orator or a public speaker, he was a polished conversationalist; he could speak for hours in the company of friends or small groups. According to his friends, his house was the venue for debates and discussions. Participants in these discussions included people of diverse schools of thought.



# Battle for Punjab University

**A** REPRESENTATIVE OF the newly emerging educated classes in the Punjab, there was no movement in the province in which Dyal Singh did not take an active part. Soon after his return from the U.K. he came in close contact with Surendranath Banerjea, who is considered to be the father of Indian nationalism, and the Indian Association founded by him. This Association took up the issue of Indian Civil Service competitive examination in which the new educated middle-class throughout India was interested. It may be mentioned that Banerjea, with R.C. Dutt and B.L. Gupta, was in the second batch of Indians who had gone to England to successfully compete for the Indian Civil Service competitive examination. They had followed the first Indian member of the ICS Satyendra Nath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's elder brother.

The success of Surendranath Banerjea, R.C. Dutt, B.L. Gupta and B.S. Thakur came as a rude shock to the British bureaucracy in India. They did not like the idea of sharing power with Indians. Having taken note of the results of the renaissance in Bengal, the rise of the New Bengal movement, the intellectual ferment and the rationalist approach of the younger generation, they influenced the India Office in England to amend the rule so as to reduce the age of entry for aspirants to the Indian Civil Service competitive examination in London. In this they succeeded. The educated middle-class in Bengal saw in this amendment an attempt to block the chances of the younger generation getting into the ICS. Meantime, Surendranath Banerjea had been dismissed from service for a lapse which was minor as compared to the much more serious lapse on the part of an English officer who had been let off merely with a warning.

Surendranath went to England to argue the case, but he lost. He then tried to enrol for a career in law, but admission was refused to him because he had been dismissed from the ICS. Surendranath was thus on the road. For the future of India this proved a blessing in disguise. Thanks to Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, he got an appointment as Professor of English in the Metropolitan Institution, which proved to be a stepping-stone for his entry into politics. He started a students association and later the Indian Association. The latter Association took up the matter of reduction of the age limit for those competing for the Indian Civil Service competitive examination and also for holding simultaneous examinations in England and India. The two issues affected the future of not only the younger generation of educated middle-classes in Bengal, but also the educated middle-class throughout India. The Indian Association, therefore, became the spearhead for the movement which gathered momentum. It sent memorials to the British Parliament. The Association also decided that its base be enlarged into an all-India organisation. And for this purpose, Surendranath Banerjea was asked to undertake a tour of other parts of India.

He first went to Agra, where he was told that for any movement to succeed in Upper India, the right place to start was Lahore. Banerjea, therefore, went to Lahore. The Punjabis extended him a very warm welcome. There was great enthusiasm in Lahore for the civil service resolutions. A branch of the Indian Association set up in Lahore, took up the issue and passed resolutions. It was the first branch outside Bengal. Its president was Dyal Singh, who remained its president so long as he lived.

From Lahore on June 8, 1877, Surendranath Banerjea went to Amritsar. Says the *History of the Indian Association*: "There (at Amritsar) his distinguished friend, Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia the philanthropist, had already arranged with the leading Sardars and gentlemen of the town to hold a meeting in connection with the civil service matters. In the words of Surendranath himself 'the meeting took place on the very afternoon of the day that I arrived in Amritsar. Almost all the Sardars of Amritsar were present, and the Town Hall, where the meeting was held, was densely crowded. The resolutions of the Calcutta meetings were adopted and a committee was appointed to obtain signature to the memorials. I cannot



conclude my account of the proceedings at Amritsar without expressing my warm acknowledgement to Sirdar Dyal Singh, who took the very greatest interest in the movement, and whose great influence and distinguished position among the Punjab Sardars, made the meeting at Amritsar so eminently successful'. Banerjea's tour of the Punjab was such a great success and so important an event, that Sir Henry Cotton, writing about this tour said that '... the idea of any Bengali influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery or a Macleod; yet it is the case that the tour of a Bengali lecturer lecturing in English in Upper India assumed the character of a triumphal success'."

Banerjea himself was quite satisfied with the results of his visit to the Punjab. In his *A Nation in the Making*, he later recalled that "in the Punjab I formed friendships the memory of which—though friends, alas, are now dead—is a grateful treasure of my life. There, for the first time, I met Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia. Our acquaintance soon ripened into a warm personal friendship. He was one of the truest and noblest men whom I have ever come across... He threw himself actively into the work of the Indian Association for which I had been deputed."

Founding of the Indian National Congress being still eight years away, the Indian Association's Lahore branch became the first political organisation in the Punjab which provided a common platform to all sections of the Indian community. As its activities were somewhat limited, even Government servants could become its members. Active members of the Association included the dozen or so Bengali lawyers, teachers or Government servants. Lawyers Jogendra Chandra Bose and Kali Prasanna Roy, Pratul Chandra Chatterjee were keenly interested in the advancement of the province. The Association's financier was Dyal Singh, its President.

One question that assumed importance at this time was the demand for the establishment of Punjab University.

Within five years of annexation of the Punjab, the British Indian Government set up an education department in the Punjab. Secondary education was started in 1859. A college was started in 1864. All the students had to sit for examinations held by the Calcutta University. The Sardars and nobility of the Punjab asked for a university for the Punjab and donated money for the purpose. The government then created what

was called the Punjab University College. It had a senate of about 70, all nominated. Dyal Singh was one of them. The college could only grant diplomas, not degrees, for which students had to go to Calcutta for the examination. Naturally the demand for a university continued to be made vehemently and persistently. But Dyal Singh who was a leader of the movement, and his Bengali friends and supporters were pitted against Dr W.G. Leitner and most of the British civilians and Orientalists in the Punjab who entertained apprehension at the Punjab following the example of Bengal where the Calcutta University was churning out graduates with modern ideas of social and even political reform. The British civilians wished that the Punjab be kept away from the pernicious influence of Bengal. W.G. Leitner, who was appointed the first principal of the Government College in Lahore, was a Jew from Central Europe, who had made his mark as a philologist and a scholar of Arabic and Mohammedan Law. He was teaching at the London University when he was handpicked by Whitehall for the Lahore assignment. And Leitner joined hands with the bureaucrats like Lepel Griffin, Col. Holroyd who wished to make Lahore the centre of learning in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, so that it would attract people even from Central Asia where Russia was then spreading its tentacles. Dr Leitner wanted the proposed university for the Punjab to be different from those of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (based on the model of London University), where the medium of instruction was English. While the Punjabis might learn a little English, he said, the medium of instruction for European sciences and modern arts should be the classical languages, namely Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit, or their derivatives, but certainly not English. Naturally Dyal Singh, people of the younger generation and his Bengali friends, opposed Leitner and the bureaucrats and their sycophant supporters, including most members of the Punjab University College senate. In pursuance of a decision of the Indian Association's general meeting held at Lahore on September 26, 1880, its president Dyal Singh forwarded on October 26, 1880, for consideration of the Viceroy in Council a memorial on the proposed university for the Punjab. The Association, in giving their views on every point bearing on the question whether the principles and working of the Punjab University College have been such as to command the confidence of those who advocate high English education, have deemed it proper to fortify themselves by extracts from official documents in their support. To this



circumstance, the rather unusual length of the memorial is to be attributed. It is hoped, nevertheless that the plan adopted by the Association will prove convenient and acceptable as it may save to a great extent the trouble of referring to the documents themselves in original. This is an indication of the great controversy over the issue. And it seems it was this controversy which necessitated the starting of *The Tribune* newspaper by Dyal Singh. The very first issue of *The Tribune* (Weekly) contained an article advocating education for the Punjab through the medium of English. It carried as many as twenty special articles. Week after week, the paper hammered in the idea for the setting up the Punjab University on the same pattern as that of the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities, the medium of instruction being English. *The Tribune* carried on the battle into the camp of Leitner whose supporters questioned the right of Dyal Singh to continue as a member of the senate when his newspaper, *The Tribune*, was carrying on the campaign against the policies advocated by Leitner and others. Dyal Singh resigned from the senate.

When the Punjab University College claimed that they had brought out books in vernacular languages to popularise the study of European sciences, *The Tribune* reportedly asked the College to identify the language referred to in the claim and state whether it was Persian or Urdu, or Hindi or Punjabi? It rebutted the criticism that it was an enemy of Sanskrit, Persian and other classical languages of Asia, or of the schemes for establishing an independent university in Punjab. It stood for encouragement of the classical languages, but the medium of instruction for modern Western education must be English. It exposed the hollowness of the claims put forward by Dr Leitner and others.

In a leading article, the paper posed the question whether the vernaculars of the Punjab were a fit media for imparting university education. There was a lamentable dearth of textbooks in the vernacular languages for higher courses. It wrote : "The few textbooks that exist are almost wholly worthless. Also, even if a given number of proper textbooks could be produced in a given period, they alone would be far from enough to convey to our graduates a sound university education." Its conclusion: "The scheme for orientalising education cannot but be fraught with the most mischievous consequences to the people of these provinces."

While *The Tribune* was carrying on the campaign for the setting up of the Punjab University on the model of the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities, Dyal Singh, as the president of the Lahore branch of the Indian Association, asked the headquarters organisation in Calcutta, the capital of the British Indian empire, also to take up the issue and exercise pressure on the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India in London. The Association's president Surendranath Banerjea and the secretary Anand Mohan Bose took up the issue and wrote to the Secretary of State for India.

Surendranath Banerjea who had, in 1877, seen in Lahore the text of a memorial on the subject proposed to be sent to the Government and had amended it, now pursued the proposal. All these efforts by Dyal Singh and his friends and those of the younger generation in the Punjab, resulted in a sanction to enact legislation for the setting up of the Punjab University on the model of London University and at par with the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities. The battle, said Jogendra Chandra Bose, had been won.

Wrote Bose: "Dr Leitner,\* backed by immense influence tried his best to orientalise education in the Punjab, but Sirdar Dyal Singh accepted the leadership of the opposition, started *The Tribune* and proved instrumental in saving the situation." It was a victory of Dyal Singh, its leader and *The Tribune*. In the next few years the Punjab University had driven its sister, Calcutta University, out of the field as regards the natives of the province.

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\*Dr W.G. Leitner, who was at the centre of controversy, was an academician, not an administrator. The official history of the Punjab University seems to suggest that the brilliant Dr Leitner had to go because, under him, there was too much laxity regarding funds and accounts of the University. When he went back to England, he started a Punjabi institute at Woking.



## The Tribune

**D**URING DYAL SINGH'S sojourn in England and his travels in Europe, he realised the importance of the Press in the life of a nation. He must have thought of the state of the Press in India generally and of the Punjab and Upper India particularly.

Soon after the annexation of the Punjab, some senior officials had helped start a paper called the *Lahore Chronicle*. When some young civilians later started the *Indian Public Opinion* in 1866, the *Lahore Chronicle* was unable to stand the competition and got merged with the *Indian Public Opinion*. Then in 1872, the *Civil and Military Gazette* was founded in Simla as a weekly. It took over the *Moffusilite* of Agra (started in 1845), and also the *Indian Public Opinion* and in 1876 it started publication from Lahore. This was the year Dyal Singh returned from his sojourn in Europe.

While *The Pioneer* of Allahabad claimed to be an all-India paper catering to and championing the cause of all-India services, the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore dealt primarily with military affairs and the problems faced by the Punjab, as seen by the British empire-builders like Rudyard Kipling. For the expression of opinion of the large masses of Indian people there was no vehicle, and it was for Dyal Singh to fill the vacuum.

Several people have claimed the credit for giving Dyal Singh the idea of starting the paper. Surendranath Banerjea wrote that it was he who "persuaded" Dyal Singh to start a newspaper at Lahore. Rai Bahadur Mul Raj says that in 1877 or 1878, he and Jogendra Chandra Bose "approached Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia with a request to start a paper in English", to give a lead to the movement for the establishment of a university for the Punjab on the model of the universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The historian of the Brahmo Samaj movement in India, Sivanath Sastri says that, when he first visited the Punjab in 1879 and met Dyal Singh Majithia, "the subject that was chiefly discussed between us was the starting of a weekly journal for the Punjab, as the exponent of Indian opinion in the province". It was Sastri, who got Dyal Singh the services of Sheetalchandra Mukherjee. Bipin Chandra Pal, who worked on the staff of *The Tribune* for a few months, has also told us that "the Bengali community in Lahore induced Sirdar Dyal Singh to start *The Tribune*". Nagendranath Gupta, who edited *The Tribune* for a decade, till the death of the Sirdar, also says that the "Sirdar started *The Tribune* on the suggestion of friends" and his trusted advisers at Lahore, who were Bengalis.

The trusted friends whom he often consulted were Sir Pratul Chandra Chatterjee (who later became a judge of the Chief Court at Lahore), Jogendra Chandra Bose and Babu Kali Prasanna Roy, members of the Lahore Bar, and Babu Avinash Chandra Majumdar, an employee of North Western Railway who was a popular social worker. All of them were important Brahmo leaders. There was also the Christian Bar-at-Law Golak Nath Chatterjee.

As, according to Surendranath Banerjea himself, "there was a certain aristocratic reserve about Dyal Singh which hid from the public the pure gold that formed the stuff of nature", his reference to "persuasion" may be somewhat exaggerated. There is, of course, little doubt that Dyal Singh took the help of Surendranath Banerjea and several of his Brahmo Samaj friends. Dyal Singh's visit to Calcutta in 1880 may also be relevant. For, it was about this time, that a press was purchased for him by Surendranath Banerjea in Calcutta.

When Surendranath Banerjea and Dyal Singh first met in 1877, the latter asked for help. Banerjea promised to purchase printing machinery. He also recommended the appointment of a upcoming Brahmo litterateur, Sitalakanta Chatterjee. Dyal Singh engaged his services in 1877, four years before *The Tribune* was started. If we remember that Dyal Singh took over a decade to decide on setting up an educational institution called the Union Academy, the period of four years for preparation of launching *The Tribune* is understandable. Around the time the Press Association was formed in Calcutta in 1878, Dyal Singh was there. He was associated with the opposition to the Vernacular Press Act, 1878, and appointed a



member of the Standing Committee at the Town Hall meeting of the Indian Association. His presence at Calcutta for the foundation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir, of which he was trustee, would certainly have been an occasion to discuss the matter in detail with his friends Surendranath Banerjea, Anand Mohan Bose and Sivanath Sastri. Within a year Banerjea had bought the machinery for the paper.

According to Sheikh Abdul Rehman of Amritsar, who brought the materials from the Lahore railway station and set up *The Tribune* press, the Sirdar “appointed and dismissed the employees of the press”. R. Williams, whom he appointed printer, had worked on several newspapers, including the *Civil and Military Gazette*.

The first twelve-page issue of *The Tribune* weekly, came out on February 2, 1881. The year of publication of the first issue, incidentally, was the same as of Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s *Kesari*, or the year which saw the repeal of the infamous Vernacular Act.

The first editorial read as follows:

“Our appearance in the field of journalism is to meet a crying want of this part of India, namely, an English journal for the representation of ‘native’ opinion.

“The aim of *The Tribune* will be, as its name imports fairly and temperately, to advocate the cause of the mute masses. In its columns we shall seek to represent the public opinion of India, especially of Upper India, and what is more, we shall strive as much as lies in the compass of our humble abilities to create and educate such opinion.

“As the mouthpiece of the people, *The Tribune* will be conducted on broad and catholic principles. Our sympathies will be comprehensive. We shall not be identified with any particular race, class or creed, nor seek to give prominence to the views of any particular party. But our paper, as the champion of the people, will not scruple to speak plainly against class interests, nor shrink from boldly assailing them whenever they should happen to clash with the welfare of the masses... It shall be our duty to echo the real feelings of the community. We shall always take a stand against those who seek to pass off their own interested opinions as those of the public.

“*The Tribune* will further aim at uniting the various nationalities and races of India in the great work of national regeneration. We hold to the

opinion that the increase of mutual sympathy among them is of great import to the well-being of India.

“*The Tribune* will also exert itself to lessen the gulf between the European section of the community and their native fellow-subjects. We rest our hope of the improvement of our political condition on the sterling qualities of the English character, of which love of justice and fair-play are the predominant traits.

“Towards the rulers of the country, our conduct will be marked by staunch and unswerving loyalty. It is the fundamental doctrine of our political creed that the British Government is the best that this country has ever had in modern times, and that its continuance is one of the conditions vitally essential to its regeneration. We believe that every educated native of India treasures this in his heart as a sacred truth.

“As a journal, *The Tribune*, owing its very existence to the benign policy of our rulers which has thrown open the treasures of Western learning to our heretofore benighted minds and granted us the invaluable boon of a Free Press, will never be guilty of the ingratitude of ignoring its obligations to them. As the mouthpiece of the people, *The Tribune* will make known to the Government their grievances, hopes and aspirations. At the same time, our loyalty shall not be incompatible with a free but temperate and respectful criticism of measures and actions when they call for such criticism.

“In our criticism of public men or institutions or of private individuals, we shall deem it our bounden duty to put the most charitable construction, compatible with sense, on their acts, and to use the mildest language. The projectors and conductors of *The Tribune* have no pet theories to maintain nor any personal interests to serve through the medium of this journal. No considerations of pecuniary gain have incited them to this enterprise. They profess simply to act for the public weal and they are conscious that the public weal is more advanced by charity and moderation than by rancour and hard words.

“In religious matters, we shall maintain a strictly neutral position. On social topics, our sympathies will be with a gentle and cautious course of reform.

“We recommend *The Tribune* to the favourable notice of our educated countrymen. It is to furnish them with a medium for the ventilation



of their opinions that this journal has been ushered into existence, and it is on their patronage and support that its success, nay its vitality, depends.”

*The Tribune* was like *The Bengalee*; its size was 8 inches by 18 inches, with three columns to each page. It was priced at four annas per copy, or Rs 10 for annual subscription in advance. The first two pages were filled with items relating to political, economic, national and international issues condensed mostly from other journals under the omnibus heading “The Week”. Most of the matter was in 8 point type, without any headings or dateline. Four to five pages were devoted to editorial comments on social, administrative or educational issues. Staff members wrote about 2000 words every day to fill the weekly issue.

It is significant that at a time when Indian-owned newspapers in other parts of the country bore such communal, parochial or provincial names as *The Mahratta*, *The Hindu*, *The Hindoo Patriot* or *The Bengalee*, Dyal Singh named it *The Tribune*, a tribune for the people.

Newspapers in different parts of the country welcomed the publication of *The Tribune*. Wrote *The Hindoo Patriot* dated February 7, 1881: “*The Tribune* will be under native management exclusively. The programme is fair and liberal. The first number is well written and, if our younger brother goes on as he has begun, he will prove a strong pillar of northern India.”

*The Hindu*, Madras, dated February 9, 1881, hailed with delight this new addition to the native Press of India: “That Press has a great mission in this country in moulding, as well as representing, public opinion. The hope of India rests upon its success. *The Tribune* has a noble and arduous object to achieve and, judging from the contents of the first number, we have no doubt that our new brother in the field will be equal to the task. The number before us contains much original matter written with considerable ability. It is well printed and neatly got up.”

The *Brahmo Public Opinion* of February 10 welcomed *The Tribune*. After referring to the three editorial articles, it observed: “The get up is excellent and the editorial staff appears to be strong and powerful. Judging from the first issue, *The Tribune* seems to be fully equipped to remove one of the crying wants of Lahore”. According to the *Behar Herald* of February 22, 1881, “the paper is entirely under native management. If it

goes on as it has begun, it will supply a crying need of the Punjab.”

The *Calcutta Fortnightly Review* of February 24 wrote : “*The Tribune*, professedly a national paper, is well written in a style that makes us imagine a certain well-known journalist of scholastic fame is at its back, acting as the mainspring; but we may be mistaken and it may be, as it professes to be, entirely in native hands. If so, we sincerely compliment Government on the result of their educational policy; for the English of our contemporary is perfect.” The person associated with editing of *The Tribune* in Lahore was Sitalakanta Chatterjee. There are contradictory statements in regard to the exact designation of Sitalakanta Chatterjee and his relationship with Sirdar Dyal Singh. Bipin Chandra Pal has written that Sitalakanta Chatterjee was a sub-editor on *The Tribune*. The editor was Sheetalchandra Mukherjee, who edited his own paper, *Indian People* of Allahabad. Jogendra Chandra Bose, a close friend of Dyal Singh, was the joint editor. According to Pratul Chandra Chatterjee, Dyal Singh had engaged the services of Sitalakanta Chatterjee in 1877 “with full powers as editor to publish what he liked, and that there existed an agreement between him and the proprietor to the effect that the proprietor had no right to interfere with the publication of articles in the newspaper.” However, it appears that the agreement was not a written one but only verbal. Once the Chief Court too observed that Sitalakanta Chatterjee was a sub-editor and not editor.

On one occasion in 1881-82, Sitalakanta Chatterjee had not inserted an article of Jogendra Chandra Bose, pleader, and the Sirdar had ordered Sitalakanta Chatterjee to insert the article. Dyal Singh exercised his right to have certain articles inserted. Once he had modified some remarks regarding a civilian Mr Knox on the advice of a native pastor Rajab Ali. The Amritsar Municipal secretary Edward Nicholl once spoke to Dyal Singh about some remarks about him and the Sirdar promised to speak to the editor about it. “I did speak to the editor about them, and the latter said that he had perfect liberty in the matter of comments according to the agreement under which he had undertaken to edit the paper and said that he would resign the service if the liberty was interfered with. Subsequently, the editor did send in resignation which came into effect on June 11, 1882.” On one occasion, Sitalakanta Chatterjee reportedly said that



the proprietor wanted him to work as sub-editor under Jogendra Chandra Bose and that he would not do so and resigned. Jogendra Chandra Bose now took over charge and held it till October 1886.

Even after Sitalakanta Chatterjee was recalled as editor of *The Tribune* (now a biweekly), Dyal Singh “used to write editorial notes and Sitalakanta Chatterjee used to put them in his own English and bring them in proper style.” Although there is no record of the editorial notes written by Dyal Singh, a careful perusal of the editorials, or editorial notes in *The Tribune* shows there is variation in style of the editorials or notes in *The Tribune*. The composition of some pieces is involved. There are also some that are straightforward without embellishment. The style and contents of some of the pieces suggest that the Sirdar might have written them, his address as chairman of the Reception Committee\* of the Indian National Congress at its session in Lahore in 1893 being the yardstick. It is the biographer’s belief that a few of the pieces written by Dyal Singh can certainly be identified. The editorial note about the absence of a hall in Lahore for public meetings is possibly his own. At the time we are writing about, there were only two halls in Lahore, the Town Hall meant for official functions and the Montgomery Hall, used by European civilians. There was, of course, a small Shiksha Sabha hall for religious discourses only. As president of the Indian Association’s Lahore branch Dyal Singh used to organise meetings in the courtyard of *The Tribune* in Anarkali. When Surendranath Banerjea was dragged into a contempt of court case, arising out of the insistence of the Calcutta High Court judge Norris on the bringing of the *Shalagram* idol into the court, and a meeting was to be held in Lahore, the premises of *The Tribune* were used. The meeting was well-attended. Wrote *The Tribune*: “the recent meetings have been held in our small compound quite inadequate to contain such vast multitudes of people as gathered on the occasions. The result was that, after the yard and the corridors had been filled to suffocation, half-sitting and half-standing, hundreds had to go up to the surrounding roofs and squat down upon their edges to obtain a view of the proceedings below. What then must have been the suffering of the entire congregation under the oppressive heat of these dog days, those who were present can now

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\* Reproduced as an appendix

remember, and those who were not can well imagine."

In the third anniversary issue, on February 2, 1884, *The Tribune* told its readers that "those who take up our issue to find light reading must be disappointed... The duties which we have undertaken to perform are of such a nature that they do not permit of our being gay or frivolous. We have not only to create but also to develop and educate public opinion in our part of the country. A journal with such high objectives can hardly afford to be anything but serious. Those of our readers who want light reading must, therefore, look for it somewhere else. For ourselves all we can promise our friends is that we shall continue to be as serious as we have hitherto been, and that we shall walk straight on in what we conceive to be our path of duty, reflecting native views, native wants, advocating native causes and pleading for redressal of native grievances with all our might, whether they like us or not."

*The Tribune*, a journal especially of Upper India, was also a journal of all India, closely associated with all the progressive and liberal movements in all parts of India. It was keenly interested in events outside India too, especially those in the neighbouring countries. An idea of the subjects on which it commented in its principal editorials during 1881, or the first year of its existence, could be had from the following :

The Employment of the Natives of India in Their own country; Mr Fawcatt on Public Works in India; The Afghan Debate in the Lords; Direct versus Indirect Taxation in India; Secret Correspondence between the Afghan and Russian Governments; A Royal Commission for India; Forest Conservancy in India; The Famine Commission; Punjab Education Report; Prospects of Educated Indians; Mr Caird on the Indian Government; Loyalty of Educated Indians; Kashmir; Lord Beaconsfield; The Future of India; Few More Words on the last Convocation; Report of the Punjab University College; Juvenile Offenders; Industrial Arts in India; Encouragement of Diversity of Occupations in India; The Quarterly on the Afghan Question; Salaries of High Court Judges; Proposed Abolition of Opium Monopoly; Encouragement of Private Enterprise in India; The new Revenue and Agriculture Department; Irrigation in Upper India; Condition of Deccan Peasantry; Public Morality in the Punjab; Punjab Irrigation Works; Situation in Afghanistan; Lord Hartington at Cooper's Hill; East Indian Services; Restitution of Berar; Public Health



in the NWFP and Oudh 1880; Training of Junior Civilians in Bengal; Punjab Chief Court; Representative Government in Mysore; Lord Ripon at Agra; Administration of Civil Justice in the Punjab.

This proportion of the mix of local, provincial, national and international subjects for editorial notice continued during and after the lifetime of the Sirdar, whose liberal and progressive outlook in regard to education, social reform and political developments, whose public spirit and whose zeal for modernisation influenced the editorial policy.

The very first issue of *The Tribune* on February 2, 1881, as we have noticed earlier, had carried the first of twenty articles on the need for education in the Punjab on modern lines through the medium of English. Another subject that was taken up in the first issue was the case of Robert Knight and the Statesman Defence Fund.

During Dyal Singh's lifetime, and afterwards, the newspaper never failed to expose, without fear or prejudice, instances where there was proof of official wrong-doing, abuse of authority or racial discrimination. Within ten months of the publication of the first issue of *The Tribune*, came the first clash with the Government. It was related to the biased reporting in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of the Hindu-Muslim riots in Multan. The *Gazette* had published prejudicial reports against Hindu victims of Muslim violence in Multan. *The Tribune* did not hesitate to unmask the partiality of certain British officials, who openly sided with the Muslims, especially Mr Roe, the then Deputy Commissioner of Multan.

Wrote *The Tribune*: "We are glad to learn that the leading Moham-medans, who were accused by the Hindu *faqirs* of having instigated the Mohammedan rioters to set fire to temples, had been declared innocent by Mr Roe. We never believed that any sensible man, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, had anything to do with the riots. Had they had any hand in the riots, they would have assumed far larger proportions. The riots were not the result of any instigation or plotting, though *The Pioneer* and the *Civil and Military Gazette* would give words to prove so. They were the inevitable outcome of the unsteady, unwise and thoughtless course pursued by the Multan authorities in regard to the beef question.

"The Temple and Tomb question had nothing to do with the riots. But for the orders of the 15th September permitting the Mohammedans to carry beef through any gate or street, there would have been no riot in

Multan. As we have always believed that the leading Hindus and Mohammedans of Multan had nothing to do with the riots, we now earnestly entreat them to do all that lies in their power to bring about a reconciliation between the two communities. The riots are a disgrace of which both the Hindus and Mohammedans of Multan should be ashamed. It is an unspeakable shame that, being natives of the same country and having identical national interests, Hindus and Mohammedans should have such unkindly feelings for each other."

When it became known that the Deputy Commissioner Mr Roe intended to proceed against *The Tribune*, the paper received letters from all parts of Punjab assuring it of the sympathy of most educated persons and offering to raise subscriptions for a defence fund. A sum of Rs 1,000 was collected at Multan for this purpose.

Taking note of the readers' feelings, the paper wrote that it would always endeavour to deserve the people's sympathy and approbation. "Our mission is to fight boldly, loyally and conscientiously for the country's interests, and we would sooner cease to exist than lose sight of that mission," it said.

Wrote Surendranath Banerjea's *The Bengalee* : "Mr Roe sought to cast leading citizens into prison, and finish off this drama by seeking to institute an action for libel against our contemporary, *The Tribune*. Our contemporary has no cause for regret, if it is dragged into court. The cross-examination of Mr Roe will bring out the truth in connection with the riots."

Referring to the role *The Tribune* was playing, *The Bengalee* wrote: "*The Tribune* is the champion of truth and progress in Punjab and the action which Mr Roe seeks to institute against it will help the cause of truth. *The Tribune* commands at this moment the approbation of the entire educated community of India. But for our contemporary, we should not have known all that we know about the Multan riots. *The Tribune* has done a real service..."

Ultimately, however, Mr Roe considered discretion the better part of valour, and dropped the idea of instituting the libel case against *The Tribune*.

On several occasions, the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab and high officials told the deputations that waited on them with memorials to get



support from *The Tribune* for their views or suggestions and for the redressal of grievances. A senior British officer once wrote that the Punjab was being ruled by two entities—the Governor and *The Tribune*, and that Secretaries and district officers were nowhere in the picture.

In a series of articles some years later, it exposed corruption in the Punjab University, especially corruption relating to examination results. The campaign led to the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry against the then Registrar of the University, who later, as a result of the enquiry, was dismissed from service. On one occasion *The Tribune* wrote: “The Punjab University has not yet passed the stage of teething, and yet it pretends to set up a higher standard of education than the old universities, which have turned out India’s best scholars and literary and professional men. “It fixes impossible percentages of pass-marks, but the Senate, which does not sanction this work is composed of men, majority of whom are ideal ignoramuses. No university in the world has such a staff of poor professors as our ‘ideal’ university. It is in one word, the biggest sham that was ever imposed upon a people.”

It would be relevant to mention that Dyal Singh’s advocacy for liberal education was not limited to Punjab or any particular section of the society. He stood for the extension of educational facilities to all and sundry.

When Sayyid Ahmed Khan came to Punjab to give his message for education to the Muslims, Dyal Singh was among those, who received him at the railway station at Lahore. He also made handsome donations to Anjuman-i-Islamia. Sir Sayyid Khan appreciated this gesture. His travelogue *Safarnama-i-Punjab* (Aligarh, 1884) said about Dyal Singh as follows : “Sirdar Dyal Singh Bahadur Majithia is a very well-known and highly respected chief of the fraternity of Sikh Sardars. A noble character, a loving nature, goodwill for all and respect for the people of all communities are his personal attainments. Muslims also consider him as their sincerest friend and the noblest benefactor... He is the only person at Lahore, rather in the whole province of Punjab, of whom Punjabis and all Indians can feel justly proud.”

In 1890, a proposal was mooted for starting a Khalsa College. A vigorous campaign was launched for funds for setting up the college. A controversy also arose about the place where the college should be lo-

cated. Among other places Lahore, Rawalpindi and Amritsar laid claims. *The Tribune* wrote: "There are some people—particularly European gentlemen and a few Sikh gentlemen of the patriotic persuasion interested in the movement—who wish to have the college at Lahore. But the general Sikh opinion is that the college bearing the name of Khalsa should be at Amritsar, the headquarters of the Khalsa. And we are of the same opinion too. Of course, there would be no great difference if the college be established at Lahore. However, the sentiments of the people should be respected."

Replying in 1883 to criticism that the newspaper dealt with topics which had nothing to do with the Punjab, *The Tribune* wrote that the newspaper was not only for the Punjab but for the whole of Upper India. It advised the educated readers to fully grasp the idea of not a provincial nationality, "which would ever be destructive of the progress of our country as a whole," but of an Indian nationality. On one occasion, it was critical of the institution of Honorary Magistrate. "By patronising rich fools, the Government shows that they care more for the prosperity of the few, than the welfare of the many." *The Tribune* raised its voice against mismanagement of the affairs of the Golden Temple. Its manager, who was also an Honorary Magistrate, thus having protection of the Government, was indifferent to charges brought against him by the *pujaris*, *mutsadis* and priests of the Durbar Saheb. "We think that it will not be long before he will have to resign his office or things will assume a very serious shape."

*The Tribune* carried a series of articles defending the rule of Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, after the death of Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

It welcomed the restoration of Mysore to the native prince at a time when "doubts had been entertained uptill the last moment" whether or not the British Government would actually restore the rule. According to the newspaper, "the services unite, almost to a man, where there is a question of extending of the area of British possessions and, indeed, it is exceedingly difficult, nay almost impossible, for an average Britisher to realise that anyone in his heart can object to being governed by Englishmen."

The newspaper raised its voice to defend Maharaja Holkar being subjected to a tirade by the Anglo-Indian Press for having sought redress of his grievances from the paramount power.



It also took up the case of Duleep Singh. It wrote: "Maharaja Duleep Singh's innocent desire of living in the Punjab is not going to be satisfied by our heartless Government. They deprived him of his throne and converted him into Christianity, when he was a mere boy, and all this in the capacity of guardians responsible to the King of Kings for his future welfare. For a long time, he was living in the midst of strange hallucinations; gradually the novelty of the European society passed away. Duleep then came to his senses and wistfully turned his eyes to the Land of the Five Waters, and read of his brave father, his brave followers and their brave deeds. But, alas! it was all finished. Heaven itself could not restore to him the throne of the Punjab, which in defiance of all religion and morality was snatched away by the guardian from his ward.

"After a few years' residence in England, he became pecuniarily embarrassed. Though a private gentleman, he could not forget that he was once the ruler of the Punjab and so used to live like an Oriental potentate. The generous British Government, which had taken his all, would now and then come forward to relieve him of his difficulties. But constant begging he did not like. Then, he was a married man and had a large number of children. As a father, he must provide for them. Once more he turned his eyes towards the Punjab and asked the Government to restore to him the private estates of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which he possessed before coming to the throne, and other private movable properties. The Government turned a deaf ear to his prayers, and Duleep's heart was once more deeply wounded. What would he do? He must sell his estate in England and as land and living was cheaper in India, he could buy a large property in India with the proceeds of the sale, and pass his remaining days in the midst of his own people with the satisfaction that his children would not have to beg for subsistence. But, alas! he must spend his remaining days at Ootacamund, the summer residence of the Madras Government on the top of the Nilgiris. What a change! Once a ruler, now a political prisoner. If Duleep Singh is a sensible man and has the least self-respect in him, he would avoid both India and England and settle in the republican America, with the satisfaction that if he is no longer a sovereign, he is neither a subject."

Three weeks later, Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote the following "open letter" to his beloved countrymen:

"It was not my intention ever to return to reside in India, but *Sutgooroo*,

who governs all destiny, and is more powerful than I, his erring creature, has caused circumstances to be so brought about that, against my will, I am compelled to quit England, in order to occupy a humble sphere in India. I submit to His will; being persuaded that whatever is for the best will happen. I now, therefore, beg forgiveness of you Khalsa Jee or the Pure, for having forsaken the faith of my ancestors for a foreign religion; but I was very young when I embraced Christianity.

“It is my fond desire on reaching Bombay to take the *Pahul* again, and I sincerely hope for your prayers to the *Sutgooroo* on that solemn occasion. But in returning to the faith of my ancestors, you must clearly understand, Khalsa Jee, that I have no intention of conforming to the errors introduced into Sikhism by those who were not true Sikhs—such, for instance, as wretched caste observances or abstinence from meat and drink, which *Sutgooroo* has ordained should be received with thankfulness by all mankind; but to worship the pure and beautiful tenets of Baba Nanak and obey the commands of Gooroo Govind Singh.

“I am compelled to write this to you because I am not permitted to visit you in the Punjab, as I had much hoped to do.

“Truly a noble reward for my unwavering loyalty to the Empress of India. But *Sutgooroo*’s will be done.”

*The Tribune* commented : “The above letter, dated London, the 25th March, has been addressed, as will be seen from the contents, by Maharaja Duleep Singh to his countrymen, and who can read it without shedding tears? The Sikhs still fondly cherish the memory of the Lion of the Punjab, and the heartless treatment that his son and heir had received at the hands of the Government has deeply wounded their feelings. The refusal of Government to permit Duleep Singh to live in the Punjab, or even to visit it, is casting an unjust slur upon the loyalty of the brave Sikhs.

“It is true that they have not entirely forgotten the glorious days of the Khalsa; it is true they still curse the cowardly traitors, who sold the Khalsa to shame, but the once brave enemies have turned faithful subjects and a second Lion even would now find it a difficult task to make them rise against the British Government. The Sikhs would never desert their English masters and a little consideration for the feelings of those who have fought in China, Africa, Burmah, and Afghanistan, and who reconquered India for the White people during the Sepoy Mutiny, could never have been thrown away. Poor Duleep! Your countrymen can weep only for you.”



## Among Fathers of Congress

NOT MANY PEOPLE know today that Dyal Singh, in the words of Annie Besant, was a "pillar of strength to the Indian National Congress" and that he was one of the seventeen "good men and true" who founded the Congress. These seventeen men had gathered together in Adyar in Madras for the annual Theosophical convention in December 1884. Those who attended it were delegates or sympathisers and included the cream of Indian intelligentsia from all parts of the country, or such veterans as Surendranath Banerjea, Dadabhai Naoroji, Anand Mohan Bose, G.M. Telang and Dyal Singh who had possibly gone to Madras with his Brahmo friends. These seventeen men decided to form an all-India organisation representing all shades of opinion and from all parts of the country. They all were dedicated to the cause of advancement of India. They decided to meet in December 1885 at Poona. It was because of an epidemic in Poona that the venue was later shifted to Bombay and the meeting, which later became the first session of the Indian National Congress, met there. Dyal Singh was not present at this meeting held in camera, but those who attended it included the editor of *The Tribune*.

Other delegates from the Punjab, be it a Kanhaiyalal or Muralidhar or an Agnihotri, were nominated by Dyal Singh in his capacity as the president of the Lahore branch of the Indian Association. The editor of *The Tribune*, or some members of the staff, were always present at the subsequent annual sessions of the Congress.

The objects of the Congress were to promote friendship between public workers in all parts of the country, to promote national unity, to bring together and put forward the demands of the educated class on questions of social reforms, to determine the line to be adopted by political workers. Resolutions passed by the Congress included demand for the

abolition of the system of nomination of Indian members of legislative councils, and for widening of their powers, simultaneous examination in India and the U.K. for the ICS and raising the minimum age of candidates for these examinations. The future Congress sessions were to deliberate not only on political matters, but also on social and economic reforms. At the second session of the Congress in 1886 held in Calcutta, Lala Kanhaiyalal voiced the province's demand that it was ready for a legislative council.

Dyal Singh was keen that the Punjab play host to the Indian National Congress. His feelings are reflected in the following editorial of the *The Tribune* dated May 12, 1888:

“The first Indian National Congress met at Bombay, the second at Calcutta and the third at Madras. The fourth meets at Allahabad. Where will the fifth meet? There are five principal seats of Government in the five principal administrative divisions of India. Three of these divisions have already had the honour and privilege of having this great assembly of the representatives of the Indian people held in their capital cities. Will the Punjab have that honour and privilege in December 1888? Or, will the Punjab allow herself to be regarded as the most backward and unpatriotic province in India? Let Punjabis answer. All India is looking at her for a sign, as it were, to know if the land of the Sikhs is still to the mother of the most loyal and patriotic of India's sons, if the Punjabis are resolved to take the lead in the peaceful struggle after political advancement in the present, as they took the lead in warlike struggles after political aggrandisement in the past. Punjab's public spirit and patriotism have been put to a severe test. Her ability, or inability, to hold the Congress of December 1889 at Lahore will decide, in the judgement of all India, the truth or falsity of the high reputation she enjoys of public spirit and patriotism. There is no doubt that outside the Punjab, throughout India, a high opinion is entertained of the public spirit and patriotism of the Punjabis. We wish we could share this opinion, for we state but an absolute truth when we say that we have shown very little public spirit and patriotism in the Punjab. There is one honourable exception: the Arya Samaj, whose earnestness and activity are worthy of all praise. But we do hope and trust that our countrymen may soon compel us to change that opinion by holding the fifth session in the Punjab.”



The third session of the Congress at Madras, to which Bipin Chandra Pal, sub-editor of *The Tribune*, was a delegate, proved to be a landmark in the history of the Congress. It initiated steps to organise work among the masses in the presidency and also passed a resolution asking for the repeal of the Arms Act, which enabled all citizens of the British empire except Indians, to carry arms (thus a Zulu could carry arms in India but not an Indian). The decision to take the Congress to the masses and the demand for the repeal of the Arms Act unnerved the British bureaucrats, especially in United Provinces, where the fourth session was to be held, and where the British officials recalled the horrors of the 1857.

A month before the scheduled session of the Congress at Allahabad, the Viceroy Lord Dufferin, addressing a dinner meeting on St. Andrews Day in Calcutta (where not a single Indian was present) called the Congress a "microscopic minority". Present at the meeting was a leading Calcutta merchant George Yule, one-time sheriff of Calcutta, who had interested himself actively in improving social relations between Indians and Englishmen. A hard-headed Scotsman, he "saw straight into the heart of things and never hesitated to express himself with the bluntness in which a Scotsman never fails, if he wants to show it." When he heard Dufferin calling the Congress a "microscopic minority" he was left cold.

Dufferin's controversial remarks led to a good deal of resentment and the reverberations of the controversy were felt throughout India. The Anglo-Indian Press recalled that W.C. Bonnerjee had once said that the aim of the Congress was "to lower the British Government in the estimation of the people." With one voice the British-owned (Anglo-Indian) Press declared the Congress to be a "seditionist organisation."

*The Pioneer* of Allahabad criticised the "seditious" activities of the Congress. So did the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore. *The Tribune* wrote that these two papers "see nothing but rank sedition in that great national movement and, though claiming to be respectable journals, do not hesitate to misrepresent its aims and objects in the grossest possible manner. They cull objectionable passages here and there and, upon the strength of these, foist upon the leaders and supporters of the Congress thoughts which the latter perhaps never dreamt of in their wildest dreams. They go further and, after heaping upon the most advanced and loyal

sections of the Indian community, all sorts of opprobrious epithets, actually call upon the Government not only to regard the movement with positive disfavour, but to suppress it with a high hand. They claim perfect freedom from prejudices of every kind, but nevertheless their utterances are full of venom and each line, each word, shows the depth of their bias and their aversion of everything that tends to ameliorate the political condition of the people of this country. The charges advanced by these papers against the Congress are so foolish and extravagant that a mere statement of them is almost their refutation."

Among the bitter critics of the Indian National Congress were Lepel Griffin in England and Sir Auckland Colvin in India. Sir Auckland who had translated Sir Sayyid Ahmed's Urdu book, *The Causes of the Mutiny* into English and was a friend of the Sayyid, had encouraged the formation of a phoney organisation called the Patriotic Association, to oppose the Congress. Among its members were his friends (1) Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan who had been persuaded to start the organisation to protect the interests of the Muslims against those of the educationally advanced Hindus who would, if Britain left, wield power to the detriment of the Muslims minority and (2) loyalist Raja Shiv Prasad and (3) Babu Naval Kishore, the proprietor of the Navalkishore press, Lucknow. Congressmen feared that Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Raja Shiv Prasad might try to break up the Congress. (It is a different matter that Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan stayed away and Raja Shiv Prasad made a brief appearance in the Congress pandal, read out his prepared speech and quickly made his exit.)

Sir Auckland Colvin had written in *The Pioneer* a vitriolic article against the Congress. A.Ö. Hume had sent a rejoinder. But Sir Auckland was not the man to withdraw from his stand. He took all steps within his power to foil the attempts of the Congress workers to hold its session at Allahabad. Permission to hold the session was first delayed and then refused because the proposed venue was close to the cantonment, or some other frivolous grounds. It was only through a strategem, that a representative of the Congress was able to rent out the Lowther Castle for the Congress session. It was next door to the Government House. Sir Auckland Colvin was unhappy. He did away for the first time with the practice of the Government House of the city where the Congress sessions were held earlier inviting the delegates for a reception.



With the background of hostility of the British bureaucracy, Dyal Singh was advised by friends to keep away from the Allahabad session. He brushed aside the advice and said that while he had not attended the earlier sessions in person this was time when he must attend it. He went to Allahabad, spoke at the session and seconded the resolution for the election of George Yule for the presidency of the Congress. "You cannot have a better president for the Congress at this time", he said. He continued his interest in the growth of the Congress as the only representative of political organisation of the country. Once he permitted a well-known Congress orator Allah Ram to utilise the large compound of his *haveli* in Amritsar to address a meeting. The local police did not like it. The bureaucrats did not like his association with the Congress. But he did not care.

Unlike the other important people of Lahore and Sardars, he neither put on European clothes, nor did he put his signature in the Visitors Book kept whenever a representative of Queen Victoria visited Lahore. In fact, he kept away from all functions in honour of the Viceroy or the Governor. "How can the Majithia Sardar be in the good graces of the Lat Sahib, or his officer?" wrote St. Nihal Singh. "He is not the man to dance attendance upon them, like others do. He can no more bend his knee or his neck to the *feringhee* than could his father." It is reported that he called on the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab only twice, and on both occasions as a leader of a delegation of the Indian Association. After the second visit, which turned out to be formal and cold, he told members that he would not like to be embarrassed again.

## A Case of Defamation

**I**N THE PERFORMANCE of its duty *The Tribune* frequently came into conflict with the Punjab authorities, especially the Police Department. A serious conflict occurred in April, 1890. Under orders of a misguided police officer, Capt. John Paul Warburton, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Amritsar, several policemen practised gross indignities. They began recording a minute description, *hulia*, of the body of every man and woman who had ever been convicted of a criminal offence, however trivial. The methods employed were shameful. The rolls were taken and the persons concerned were examined naked in public, even if they were young women.

In two bold editorials ("Horrible oppression-I and II", April 16 and 26, 1890) *The Tribune* gave a detailed account of the outrages. It referred in particular to the case of a young widow who was compelled to expose her person in a public street and who was so overwhelmed by the indignity that she fled the city. In another case, a sergeant caught hold of a wealthy merchant and stripped him naked within the sight of the passers-by. Following the strong protests by *The Tribune* and other newspapers, the Punjab Government instituted a departmental enquiry which resulted in a circular being sent by the Inspector-General of Police about the "highly illegal and objectionable character" of the instructions in regard to taking of *hulias*. Warburton was officially reprimanded for his conduct. The official circular acknowledged, on behalf of the Lieutenant-Governor, that *The Tribune* had done a public service "which would make such things impossible in future (June 11, 1890).

Warburton was habitually indebted. *The Tribune* took up the case of his creditors. "There is no justice in the Punjab" it wrote. "A man issues orders under which thousands of men and women—many of whom have



never been convicted at all and others convicted of the pettiest offences—are made naked in public streets and minutely examined even in the private parts of their person, and he is let off with a half-hearted reprimand. Then he is charged with large indebtedness in his own district, and we offer the Government to supply it with the names of his principal creditors, who from fear of persecution dare not openly claim repayment, but it declines to have those names, promises an inquiry which never takes place, or takes place *sub rosa*.

“What does this show? Anxiety, not to find out whether Mr Warburton is indebted, but to allow him time to arrange with his creditors. We are attributing motive, we know; but we should not have done so had the Government been good enough to enlighten the public as to the motives which have governed it in its refusal to accept our offer to furnish it with the names of Mr Warburton's creditors and in making no inquiry so far as the public is aware of. The only inference possible is that the Government, knowing that admission of Mr Warburton's indebtedness would entail his dismissal, thought the best way to get out of the dilemma was to allow the matter to drop quietly.”

Warburton, who had by that time been transferred as “a mark of Government's displeasure at his disregard of orders” (he had borrowed large sums of money from several persons in Amritsar), secured official permission to sue *The Tribune*.

As the service which the paper had rendered by reporting all the cases of high-handedness in vivid detail was widely commended, thousands of admirers of *The Tribune* held meetings in various towns to collect money to assist the paper in fighting a legal suit which Warburton had decided to start against it.

On August 14, 1890, Warburton filed a complaint against the proprietor, the editor and the printer of *The Tribune* on allegations of defamation in nine issues of *The Tribune*. A report in *The Tribune* dated August 19, said: “Messrs Sinclair, Gouldsbury and Carr Stephen appeared for Mr Warburton, and Messrs P.C. Chatterjee and J.C. Bose watched the case on behalf of the proprietor of *The Tribune*. Mr Warburton was briefly examined in support of the petition, and summonses were ordered to be issued for 5th September, 1890, against all accused...” The following is the text of the complaint as summarised by the *Civil and Military Gazette*.

“The petition of J.P. Warburton, a District Superintendent of Police, Punjab, late of Amritsar and now of Sialkot: (1) That the above-named persons are the proprietor, editor, and printer, respectively, of *The Tribune* newspaper printed and published at Anarkali, Lahore. (2) That in the dates hereinafter specified i.e., the 26th April; 5th, 10th, 14th, and 21st May; 7th and 25th June; and 23rd July; the said Dyal Singh, Sitalakanta Chatterjee and Ahmed Ali defamed the petitioner at Lahore by making and publishing concerning him, the words and matters set out in the 13 extracts from *The Tribune* newspaper, in respect of which the complaint is filed. (3) That the said words and matters were intended by the said accused to harm, and that they knew or had reason to believe that the said words and matters would harm the petitioner’s reputation. (4) That the words and matters contained in *The Tribune* newspaper of the 14th May, 7th and 25th June and 23rd July conveying imputations upon the character and conduct of petitioner’s deceased mother would harm the reputation of the said mother if living; and are intended to be hurtful to the feelings of the petitioner, and his children. The petitioner, therefore, charges the said accused persons under Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code, and prays that they may be dealt with according to law.”

The complainant had been described, on the basis of a letter from a person named Buchanan, “as a man whose mother was the ‘keep’ of an Anglo-Indian colonel of a sepoy regiment”. Before the case came up for the first hearing on September 5, the editor, Sitalakanta Chatterjee, expressed regret in the newspaper for having published some objectionable matter about Warburton’s mother. Among the defence witnesses was a Brahmin girl from Amritsar whose ill-treatment at the hands of Warburton’s assistants had aroused much popular resentment.

The District Magistrate’s findings, announced on October 12, 1890, were: (i) the complainant had failed to prove the more serious charges; (ii) the proprietor of *The Tribune* was guilty of abetment of defamation under Section 502; and (iii) the editor was guilty under Section 500. Sirdar Dyal Singh was fined Rs 2,500 and Chatterji Rs 1,000.

An appeal was made to the Divisional Judge of Lahore on behalf of the proprietor and editor. The Divisional Judge of Lahore gave judgement on November 17, at 10.30 a.m. in the appeal case of Sirdar Dyal Singh and Sitalakanta Chatterjee versus Warburton. The following are excerpts



from the judgement:

“This appeal is from the order of Mr Kennedy, Magistrate, Ist Class, who found accused 1, proprietor of *The Tribune* newspaper, guilty of abetting the sale of the copies of the paper containing defamatory matter by an illegal omission in allowing them to be sold, he being in a position to prevent the sale, and it being his duty to do so. The finding was under Sections 502/109 I.P.C. The second accused, who is the editor of the said paper, has been found guilty of defamation under Section 500, I.P.C.

“These charges were framed on the same libel as it appeared in three different issues of *The Tribune*. The libel consisted of serious imputations calculated to harm the reputation of the complainant and his family, and to seriously hurt his feelings. The complainant was described as a man whose mother was “the keep” of an Anglo-Indian colonel of a sepoy regiment...

“I now come to accused 2, the editor of the paper. It will not be necessary to say much with reference to him, as I have already found that the words complained of are defamatory and are defamation of the complainant. Intention must be presumed seeing the manner in which complainant’s character was being handled by the editor, and by the unnecessary repetition of a serious libel three times, which the learned pleader for accused 2 admits was “opposed to decency and good taste.” The editor should have taken pains to find out whether the statement he received with reference to the complainant’s parent was true before he gave it to the world, as the source from which he received the information was anything but a reliable one. When he was attacking a public servant’s official character for, as he says, the public good, it most assuredly amounted to malice to drag in defamation of that official by publishing a private libel against him merely based on a letter from such a person as the man Buchanan. I cannot look upon his action as unintentional to injure and as having been done honestly and in good faith.

“I am of the opinion that the three counts have been proved. I merely accept the appeal to correct the procedure under Section 423, Criminal Procedure Code. On the first count accused no. 1 is fined Rs 500, on the second count Rs 250, and on the third count Rs 250.”

In his judgement in the application for revision filed by Mr Warburton, the Divisional Judge observed: “As far as both complainant and accused

are concerned that part of the enquiry connected with public charge is a dead letter, the Magistrate having elected to leave them alone in this trial and merely to adjudicate upon the private libels. Complainant seems to me to have his remedy with him without reference to this court. The case cannot be remanded for further inquiry; and taking of evidence for the prosecution, as all the witnesses named by them have been examined in the court. Complainant urges that he is entitled to a proper trial, but there was no necessity to come to a court of revision to obtain such trial... I consider that the prosecution were ill-advised in clubbing together charges of a public and private nature which were in no way connected. The complainant has not been permanently prejudiced by the action of the lower court. As I have observed before, he has a remedy in his own hands, there having been no adjudication on the public charges and the remarks passed with regard to them as a dead letter, as the subsequent words of the Magistrate show that he considered it unnecessary to pass any decision and no discharge, the complainant and accused are in the same position insofar as the public charges are concerned as they were at the commencement of the inquiry. With these remarks, I must reject the application for revision under Sections 435, 437 and 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code.”

Sitalakanta Chatterjee's appeal to the Chief Court was unsuccessful.

Some of the leading lawyers of Lahore, including Pratul Chandra Chatterjee, had offered to appear for the defence without charging any fees. But Dyal Singh would not accept any favour, and all the lawyers were paid in full. The total expenses in the defamation case ran up to several thousands.

Subsequently, Warburton brought another case, arising out of the first case, against Dyal Singh. On the advice of lawyers, the case was compounded by the payment of a solatium of Rs 10,000 to Warburton.

Sitalakanta Chatterjee had lost the confidence of the proprietor of *The Tribune*. He resigned. However, Surendranath Banerjea who had been happy with his selection of the editor of *The Tribune*, writing thirty years later, said: “His successful career as the first editor amply justified my choice. His fearless courage, his penetrating insight into the heart of things, and above all his supreme honesty of purpose, the first and last qualification of an Indian journalist, soon placed him in the front rank of



those who wielded their pen in the defence of their country's interest. *The Tribune* rapidly became a powerful organ of public opinion."

St. Nihal Singh, who described Sitalakanta Chatterjee as just a "bag of bones," wrote about him: "What fiery energy characterised that tiny fellow! What prodigious labour he would put forth! His nerves seemed to be made of steel. They never became jangled. He would work day and night without showing any signs of tiredness. He would write everything—leaders, leaderettes, notes and even articles. Why, at the end of the day, he still would be able to crack jokes—even against himself—and crack them in print too."

The sole purpose of the paper, says Nagendranath Gupta, was not monetary gain, but service to the people. Even after ten years i.e. when Nagendranath Gupta took over as the second regular editor, the paper was still in the red. Nagendranath Gupta, who worked for more than seven-and-a-half years, or till the death of Dyal Singh, has told us that "Dyal Singh was an ideal newspaper proprietor. He never interfered either with the editorial work or the management. He was so considerate that, on one occasion, having received intelligence of a certain affair, he came over to my house and communicated it to me. The discretion of the editor was absolute, and wholly unfettered. No matter who happened to be criticised, there was no appeal to the Sirdar. Anyone who complained to him was referred to the editor whose influence and position were greatly improved by the correct attitude of the proprietor." And again, "To my mind he fulfilled the ideals of a newspaper proprietor and it was due to his trustfulness, his tact and his consideration that *The Tribune* became so successful and exercised so great an influence in the Punjab."

This view is corroborated by one of Dyal Singh's close friends, Lala Harkishen Lal. "For a short time", he wrote, "I was asked to hold charge of *The Tribune* as editor, (presumably during the editor's leave). I had written for newspapers before but I had not tackled everyday incidents from the editorial chair before though once I had entertained such an ambition. When the manager of *The Tribune* brought me a note to this effect, I had much hesitation, but I was assured that the Sirdar was willing to help me if I undertook the task. I agreed. I wrote some notes the next morning, took them to him, and read out the same to him. His criticism and remarks showed that he had followed the trend of public affairs more

closely than an ordinary educated man does, but I was surprised to find that he had also written for me, or for *The Tribune*, a few notes himself, which he handed over to me to be printed if I liked. I did let them go in the paper. They were much appreciated, and I got the credit for them.”



## Towards Freedom

**D**YAL SINGH CONTINUED to press the Congress to hold its annual session in Lahore. In the December 1892 session at Allahabad, which he did not attend, the proposal was again mooted by the Punjab delegates. A telegram was sent to him to obtain his approval. When this was given, the oldest delegate from the Punjab moved a resolution that the following year's session be held in Lahore. Madan Mohan Malaviya and the Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakankar agreed to tour the province to arouse interest.

Although some of the Arya Samaj leaders later became lukewarm and opposed dabbling in politics, many of them joined the Congress. Bakhshi Jaishi Ram became Vice-President. At a public meeting held on December 11, 1893, the Congress delegates from Lahore elected Dyal Singh as Chairman of the Reception Committee and four members of the staff of *The Tribune* as delegates. Meetings of the Reception Committee were held in the house of Dyal Singh. Details of all the arrangements were spelt out meticulously.

Recording his impressions of a preliminary meeting of the Reception Committee, Harkishen Lal wrote: "He (Dyal Singh) conversed with us without reserve, had a hearty laugh at several of the suggestions put forward, took no offence at crude or silly remarks made, was patient with all of us, and formed opinions about most of us which, later experience showed, were quite correct. I came away with the impression that he was great because he had no rancour in his mind; he enjoyed life and considered the world good... He never shirked responsibility; he never showed preconceived opinions; he exhibited no prejudice against persons or measures, was always ready to enter into fair and frank discussion and

never excused himself on ground of illness, want of leisure or any other ground. The more I knew him the more I liked him for his genuineness.”

It was for the Reception Committee to decide upon the person to be put up for election as President of the Indian National Congress for the following year. The committee decided to invite Dadabhai Naoroji. Dyal Singh had known Dadabhai since at least the Theosophical convention in Madras in 1884. The occasion to invite him again was because he had been elected as member of the British Parliament from the constituency of Finsbury in London. An invitation was sent to him. He accepted it, but laid down a condition that he would be accompanied by another Member of Parliament from the opposite party, so as to ensure that the delicate balance which elected Gladstone to power was maintained. This was agreed to. The venue of the Lahore session was to be near Shahidganj, close to the railway station. Arrangements for the stay of Dadabhai Naoroji, A.O. Hume and some others were made in a close by hotel. For the other delegates, arrangements were made in hotels spread all over the city and also in several houses built by Dyal Singh but not yet rented out. Visitors had to make their own arrangements. A very large number of tickets was got printed, and they were all sold out. A.O. Hume, who arrived a day earlier, was extended a warm welcome. The welcome to Dadabhai Naoroji had to be seen to be believed. It was so enthusiastic that for a parallel one would have to look back to the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

On the day of opening session Dyal Singh was ill and bedridden. However, he insisted on being present. And on appearing on the platform, he received a perfect ovation. A few minutes later, the Sirdar rose and said that, because he was suffering from rheumatic pains and could not stand, he had to deny himself the pleasure of addressing the delegates that afternoon and would, with their permission, request Mr Harkishen Lal to read out his address. Mr Harkishen Lal then took up his place at the rear of the President-elect, and read out the address on behalf of the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The address illustrates the politics of the time.

Said Dyal Singh: “What the Congress contends is not that the country should be transferred from English to Indian hands—no, not the change of hands, for it would be entirely suicidal—but that the people should be governed on those broad and liberal principles which have been held by



eminent British statesmen and administrators themselves to be most conducive to the interests of both the rulers and the subjects...And let us trust that our rulers will not misunderstand our utterances, nor misjudge our actions but will be considerate and charitable towards us."

It was customary to praise the British Raj: "It is our peculiar good fortune to live under a Government which, by the spread of liberal education and the annihilation of distances, has made it practicable for us—the inhabitants of the remote parts of this vast empire—to meet every year at different centres to discuss those great problems so intimately connected with the advancement and prosperity of our fatherland. We have a glorious past, of course, of which we need be proud, and clearly see the prospect of a hopeful future before us under the benign influence of British rule. And I think most of us present here believe that the kingdom of heaven is not behind us but before us. The darkness that enshrouded the land for so many centuries has begun to be dispelled, and the streaks are already visible above the horizon that herald the approach of a glorious dawn."

The Sirdar referred to Lord Ripon, who represented the Liberal movement in India, in the most glowing terms: "A generation later appeared on the scene that liberal-minded ruler, that candid friend, that cordial sympathizer, that suppressor of wrongs and supporter of the weak and the downtrodden, the best and the most illustrious of Viceroys, the righteous Ripon to whom we owe the amalgam that united the scattered units of Indian nation and stimulated those national sentiments and aspirations of which the Indian National Congress is the direct outcome."

As the Punjab had become a part of British India much later than other provinces, political awakening lagged behind in this province. However, "to suppose that the Punjab has held aloof from the Congress is absurd. Is it possible that those credited with possessing most fire in their blood should be the least susceptible to this influence? No, the wand of the magician has touched our eyes. The history and literature of England have permeated our minds, the great heritage of our Western Aryan brethren has descended on us collaterally as it were, and we are allowed at times, grudgingly it may be, to have a share in it. Can we then in the midst of this national upheaval remain quiescent and indifferent? The same generous causes that are at work elsewhere have been operating here also, and

any difference in the results hitherto obtained is attributable mainly to the fact that these causes reached here last in point of time. We may naturally be somewhat behind the other provinces in the race of progress, but we are not idle, and if we be true to the traditions with which our past records are replete, we should try hard to make up our deficiencies and take our proper place in the march of national advancement."

The Indian National Congress, which was encouraged by the Government for the first few years, later became an object of official suspicion. The Congress was accused of disloyalty especially by Arya Samaj leaders of Punjab. Dyal Singh strongly refuted such accusations. The Congress, he held, was a perfectly loyal body which had adapted itself to changed circumstances.

"The hand of the clock", he warned, "cannot be put back. The country has been advancing rapidly under the banner which floats and flutters in the air proudly from Peshawar to Calcutta. The arbiter of the destiny of nations has not placed the people of this vast country under the aegis of British rule for no purpose. The ancient mother of art and science, of religion and philosophy, rent and torn by internal dissension and trampled under the oppressor's relentless foot was to be rescued from her woeful fate, and lo! a body of obscure merchants was sent out to trade in the East, and how this magnificent Empire was built up subsequently is known to the readers of history. But these merchants from the far West were only the means to an end. Flushed with success, exultant man often arrogates to himself what he could have never dreamt to accomplish without the help of the Almighty, the causer of causes. There is a divinity that shapes our ends. It is this divinity that shaped the ends of the body of obscure merchants, instilled patience and wisdom in their breast, expanded their views, enabled them to overcome their older and more powerful competitors, diverted their attention from commerce to conquest, taught them to form a mature organisation out of raw materials, inspired them with the principles of righteous toleration and led them along the career of splendid achievements which are now the wonder and admiration of the whole civilized world... England's mission in India would remain unfulfilled if she failed to raise a once great but now fallen country from her present degraded position, to place her on the path of moral, material and political advancement and prosperity... Happily for both England and India the



genius of the English people is eminently fitted for the performance of this mission. Their views and sympathies are as liberal as their possessions are worldwide and it is therefore that they have been able to establish an Empire over which the sun never sets. In the economy of providence there is always a fitness of things, an adaptation of means to ends; and if at this moment England leads the great Powers of the world it is because she has eminently deserved her exalted position. And that position she will continue to occupy and to maintain as long as she does not descend from her high moral pedestal, and governs the people committed to her care by providence not in the interests of the rulers but of the ruled.

Dyal Singh asked: "What is our crime?" and then added: "We are simply knocking at the door of the great British and Christian nation. We are crying for milk, nay even for water, before mother England. Is it improper on her part to give us a suckle? The hungry and thirsty children of mother England expect nourishment from that great English nation."

The concluding part of the address: "Give us our rights, concede our reasonable demands, govern us on principles of equity and good conscience, and strengthen the foundation of the Empire by broadbasing it upon the people's goodwill."

The sentiments expressed by Dyal Singh were in line with the speeches and resolutions passed by the previous and subsequent sessions of the Congress almost till Gandhiji appeared on the scene.

It is interesting to note that some eighteen years after the publication of "Bande Mataram" in *Anand Math*, with its accent on India as motherland, Dyal Singh talked of a "fatherland" and comparing Queen Victoria's England to the mother! References to Christian values and the Kingdom of Heaven is also typical of his thinking. So also the simile of a child crying for mother's milk, and of suckling. These are in some ways, typical of the Punjabi way of thinking and speaking.

Dadabhai Naoroji, in his address, highlighted the impoverishment of India owing to heavy military expenditure and the so called "Home charges". In regard to the Rules framed in connection with the Indian Council Act of 1892, he said: "Not only are the present Rules unsatisfactory even for the fulfilment of the Act itself, as interpreted in the House of Commons by Mr Gladstone; not only have we yet to obtain the full living representation of the people of India, but also a much further

extension of their extremely restrictive powers which render councils to a mere name... we are still, to all intents and purposes, under an arbitrary rule.”

The speeches at the Lahore session of the Congress were electrifying. As Rai Bahadur Kanwar Sain, a latter-day trustee of *The Tribune*, recalled: “It was exciting and thrilling, indeed a treat, to listen to the speeches of such towering personalities as Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjea, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Ferozeshah Mehta—the first architects of the Indian National Congress.”

The proceedings of the Congress were fully reported in *The Tribune*. As the text of resolutions and proceedings and reportage were distasteful to the Anglo-Indian officers. *The Tribune* came to be looked upon as anti-Government paper. The normal yardstick at that time was that those who dared criticise bureaucracy were not only anti-Government but seditionists too. Lepel Griffin is reported to have said that *The Tribune* was “distinctly seditious”. The paper was excluded from those subscribed to by Government institutions. The principal of the Government College issued orders that it should not be kept in the reading room and library.

The Lahore Congress repeated some of the earlier demands relating to the province. One resolution adopted by the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress said that “in concurrence with the first Congress held at Bombay in 1885, and other subsequent Congresses, this Congress considers that the creation of a legislative council for the province of Punjab is an absolute necessity for the good government of this province and, having regard to the fact that a similar council has been created for the United Provinces, hopes that no time will be lost in creating such a council”. Another resolution emphasised that “the Punjab, one of the most important provinces in the Empire, is still denied the right to be represented, either in the Viceroy’s, or in any local Council.” It entreated the Secretary of State for India to order the immediate appointment in each province of a committee (one-half at least of whose members shall be non-official natives of India, qualified by education and experience in the working of various courts to deal with the question) to prepare a scheme for the complete separation of all judicial and executive functions in their own province, with as little additional cost to the state as may be practicable...”



Two happenings at the Lahore session deserve a mention. One, when Surendranath Banerjea was addressing the session, the Maharaja of Kapurthala entered the pandal as a visitor. He went up to the rostrum and took his seat next to the President. Banerjea paused and called for three cheers. It later came to be known that the Maharaja of Kapurthala had earlier called on the British Chief Secretary to seek clearance for attending the Congress session. The Chief Secretary reportedly told the Maharaja that Congress sessions hardly deserved the presence of a ruling chief. The second happening centred round a Muslim delegate to the session who had persuaded Dadabhai Naoroji—without the knowledge of the Standing Committee—to accept certain resolutions asking for special concessions to the Muslims. There were protests. Calm was restored, when the resolution was withdrawn. Mr Hume, it is reported, fumed and fretted, lost his temper and became ill.

Dadabhai Naoroji called on Dyal Singh in his sickbed and conveyed his appreciation over the successful session. The organisers thought it appropriate for Dadabhai Naoroji, M.P. to call on the Lieutenant-Governor, Dennis Fitzpatrick. The suggestion to this effect was made. The Lieutenant-Governor invited the Congress President to dinner. Dadabhai attended it. However, it is said there was no discussion on politics.

The Lahore session was a memorable success, probably the most successful of all the sessions held till then. “After meeting all expenses on a liberal scale, paying for the President’s passage out and back, there was a balance left of over Rs 10,000 and this formed the nucleus of the fund out of which the Bradlaugh Hall was built.”

“After a discussion on the subject of patriotism and nationalism with us”, wrote A.C. Majumdar, “the Sirdar wrote a tract on Nationalism, got it printed in his own press and placed copies of it in our hands for free distribution. The tract elucidated how deep and broad were his ideas on nationalism”.

When Octavian Hume left India in 1894, *The Tribune* wrote under the title “Au Revoir”, that “the very thought of saying goodbye to the man to whom, more than to anyone else, India owes her re-awakening is saddening; and no wonder that the eyes of even the hardest headed businessman in the assembly were moist when Mr Hume had finished his speech—probably his last public utterance in this country.

“The love and the feeling of reverence of young India towards Mr Hume are things of which all Englishmen should feel proud, if they view them in their true light. Englishmen have deeds of romantic valour and have earned imperishable renown by unparalleled achievements in many directions, but no other Englishman, in our humble opinion, can show a record of work equal to that of Mr Hume in his own sphere. A magician who takes some dry bones and, collecting them in a heap, sprinkles water over them and makes them instinct with life, does not do a more wonderful thing than Mr Hume has done. He had literally breathed life into dead bones; has not only arrested the downward course of our unhappy people, but has dragged them on to the path of progress and has been leading them onwards towards a glorious destiny. Mr Hume concluded his speech with the following words, during the delivery of which he was very much moved: ‘There was no nation on the face of the earth that could rival India in its kindness and courtesy’, and he hoped, when the seed he had helped to sow yielded its harvest, India’s kindly sons would accord this epitaph graven not in bronze or marble, but written in loving words: He laboured zealously for India’s cause and, if he sometimes erred, he greatly loved us; Goodbye then, once more goodbye, and may the blessings of the Divine rest ever on you and yours, and upon this dear land of India and all her people.”



## The Nation's Bankers

INDIA'S PRINCIPAL CENTRES of commerce, trade and industry were the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Banking, which provided the base for these activities in these three towns, was controlled by British interests. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the first Indian bank came to be set up in the Punjab, and that the first founder-chairman of the Board of Directors was Dyal Singh Majithia. Real credit for the first move in the direction of setting up a bank goes to Dyal Singh's friend Rai Bahadur Mul Raj, judge of the small causes court at Amritsar. The inscrutable Mul Raj was a remarkable man who always worked from behind the scenes. He had drawn up the ten basic tenets of Arya Samaj for Swami Dayanand and persuaded the Congress leaders to have a written constitution. He was a great advocate of industrialisation of Punjab, a view shared by Dyal Singh Majithia, who always came forward to help new ventures. Mul Raj realised that the British financial institutions paid only nominal interest to the Indian depositors, and used Indian money to finance British-run industries and commerce. For the development of industries in the Punjab, he thought it was necessary to have a national bank. This was in 1891. He discussed the idea with his friends and acquaintances. To draw shareholders, it was necessary to rope in some important people. He, therefore, approached Dyal Singh, and the latter agreed to join the Board of Directors. Dyal Singh suggested that they should bring in Brahmo lawyer at the Chief Court, Mr Prosonno Kumar Roy, also as a director.

Mul Raj also asked Lala Lajpat Rai to send out a circular letter to selected friends insisting on an Indian joint stock bank as the first step in constructive *swadeshi*. Lajpat Rai sent the letter. The response was good. One of the earliest persons who was enthusiastic about the venture was

Lala Bulaki Ram Shastri, a practising lawyer at Amritsar. The matter was discussed further, and it was decided to bring in some bankers and lawyers of eminence. Those who were brought in included Lala Dholan Dass, a great banker, merchant and Rais of Amritsar; Lala Prabhu Dayal, a leading merchant, Rais and philanthropist of Multan; Mr E.C. Jessawala of Lahore; Bakhshi Jaishi Ram, an eminent civil lawyer of Lahore; Lala Lal Chand, President of the D.A.V. College Management Society and later President of the Bar Association and later still a judge of the Chief Court, and Lala Harkishen Lal, who, after a brilliant career at Cambridge, had returned to India with ambitions to force the pace of economic development of the country. He had the reputation of having a “massive head on sturdy shoulders, chokeful of ideas and with a perfect understanding of finance—rather high finance”—for which he drew on his knowledge of the stock exchange and working of Lombard Street, London. Although, on his return to Lahore he was practising at the Chief Court, he was taking a good deal of interest in furthering finance and industry. When Mul Raj was later transferred to Montgomery, the work was continued by his friends in Amritsar and Lahore. Lala Bulaki Ram was very active and drew up the Memorandum and Articles of Association and had the Punjab National Bank registered on May 19, 1894, under the Indian Companies Act, with its office in Anarkali Bazar, Lahore. The prospectus, with the above mentioned names of seven directors, including the chairman and the manager, Bulaki Ram Shastri, was got published in *The Tribune* and the Urdu dailies *Akhbar-i-Am* and *Paisa Akhbar*. The authorised capital was given as Rs 2 lakh, and the value of each share as Rs 100.

The first page in the first Minutes Book shows that the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Punjab National Bank was held in Sirdar Dyal Singh's house, on May 23, 1894, at 6.30 p.m. Those present included E.C. Jessawala (in chair), Jaishi Ram, Harkishen Lal, Bulaki Ram and Lala Lal Chand.

As the minutes signed by “Dyal Singh, Chairman” on May 27, 1894 and “Harkishen Lal, Secretary of the Board”, bear the stamp of Dyal Singh's personality, we reproduce :

- “1. Read certificate of the Registrar of Joint Stock Company whereby the bank was incorporated.
2. Resolved that the house in the Anarkali Bazar opposite to the



post office be secured for the bank.

3. Resolved that Mr Jessawala and Mr Bulaki Ram be authorised to purchase a safe and furniture for the bank to the extent of Rs 200.
4. Resolved that Lala Bulaki Ram be appointed manager on Rs 150 per month from first July 1894.
5. Resolved that the staff of the bank shall consist of; Accountant on Rs 50 per month or thereabout; Clerk Rs 30 per month; Treasurer Rs 50 per month; Daftari Rs 18 per month; Chaprasis (7+6) Rs 13 per month and Chowkidar Rs 12 per month. Other necessary expenses estimated at; House rent Rs 25 per month; Contingencies Rs 15 per month and Stationery Rs 50 per month.
6. Resolved that the sum of Rs 100 be sanctioned for printing prospectus, application form, receipt book etc.
7. Resolved that the bill of Lala Bulaki Ram for Rs 227-4 (being the registration expenses) be passed.
8. Resolved that the Board of Directors shall consist of seven directors.
9. The following gentlemen were appointed as first directors: (1) Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia; (2) Babu K.P. Roy, M.A.; (3) Lala Dholan Dass; (4) Lala Lal Chand, M.A.; (5) Mr E.C. Jessawala; (6) Lala Harkishen Lal; and (7) Lala Prabhu Dayal.
10. Resolved that Sirdar Dyal Singh be appointed as chairman of the Board of Directors.
11. Resolved that Lala Harkishen Lal be appointed as secretary to the Board.
12. Resolved that the Board of Directors shall meet regularly once in a fortnight on alternate Sundays.
13. Resolved that 4 directors will form a quorum."

According to the *Brief History of the Punjab National Bank*, Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia and Lala Harkishen Lal inspired the founders of the bank. "A Bengali, a Parsi and a Sikh joined hands with a few Punjabi Hindus in a purely national and cosmopolitan spirit to found the bank. They came from various parts of India, professing different faiths and with varied backgrounds. They had, however, one objective and one common aim, and that was to provide the country with a truly national

bank in order to safeguard the economic interest of the Indian people. With a missionary zeal, they went about setting up this great institution, the first bank to be established entirely with Indian capital, owned, managed and operated by Indians.”

*The Tribune* welcomed the proposal and wrote : “It will readily be admitted that the future of India depends upon its material resources which have not, unfortunately, for a long time past, received proper attention of the people of the country. But of late considerable progress has been made in this direction by the people of Punjab. Cloth mills, ginning machines and other small factories have been opened in different towns, and the people have already begun to appreciate the value and to realize the benefits of such enterprises. With the development of industries a large amount of capital is required always ready at hand. This want is supplied by banks which are giving timely assistance to industrial enterprises, at the same time finding employment for many of those people who know not how to invest it. The necessity of establishing a bank at Lahore, entirely managed by the people of this province, will be recognised by those who are acquainted with the present economic condition of the province. The closing of mints to the public has immensely raised the rates of interest in all commercial towns. There is not the slightest doubt that the company which has been registered under the name of “The Punjab National Bank Limited” will meet with every success and encouragement, and that the high rate of interest will secure large profits to the shareholders. It will be the aim and object of the bank to adapt itself to the requirements of the people, and its endeavour to encourage and assist the more important native industries which are now withering for want of capital and guidance. The directors hope that their efforts will be appreciated and that they will win the confidence of the people.”

It needs to be mentioned, however, that it wasn't too smooth a sailing. While Mul Raj had withdrawn his deposits in the Bank of Bengal (to be renamed later as the Imperial Bank) and kept the money with a friend in Lahore to be deposited in the proposed Punjab National Bank, Lal Chand at one stage had second thoughts and was not in favour of starting an indigenous bank. Doubts persisted in the minds of many people who had no idea of the working of a joint stock bank. To allay the misgivings in



regard to limited liability banking under the joint stock system, Lala Harkishen Lal wrote a 1500-word letter in *The Tribune*.

There were also some problems amongst members of the Board of Directors. There were protagonists of the Arya Samaj and also antagonists. Manager Lala Bulaki Ram Shastri felt that he was being pressurised by Lala Lal Chand to join the Arya Samaj. Differences came to a head, and Lala Bulaki Ram Shastri, whose appointment as manager had been confirmed on July 5, 1894, resigned after five days. It was his complaint that he “worked for more than six months for the bank without getting any remuneration, studying books and working out the smallest details for the bank, even to the design on the cheque and inducing my friends to be shareholders. While all this time I was borrowing money (having shifted from Amritsar) to support myself, Lala Lal Chand was doing everything in his own way and delaying the work.” When Bulaki Ram Shastri left, Harkishen Lal acted as secretary-cum-manager.

However, the premises had been taken on rent and the staff recruited. By November 1894, more people had promised to cooperate. When the Board of Directors met on November 21, fourteen people purchased shares. Of the 250 shares of Rs 100 each, Dyal Singh Majithia bought the maximum number (100). Four others, namely Mr E.C. Jessawala, Lala Prabhu Dayal, Bakhshi Jaishi Ram and Lala Harkishen Lal bought twenty shares each. Of the remaining nine shareholders, one bought fifteen, four bought ten each, three bought five each, one shareholder took two shares and the fourteenth shareholder took one. Excepting Dyal Singh, all the other shareholders took only a modest number of shares, the underlying idea being that the control of the bank vest in a large number of shareholders.

The first meeting of shareholders took some important decisions. The directors were to be paid a remuneration of Rs 10 for every meeting attended, subject to the proviso that no director would draw more than twenty rupees in any one month. It was also agreed that this decision would come into force after June 1, 1895, in other words some months after the banking operations commenced. It was also agreed voluntarily that no loans were to be granted to businesses directly or indirectly connected with the directors.

Ten days before the bank could launch its operations, Lala Dalpat

Rai, brother of Lala Lajpat Rai, was appointed manager to relieve the busy Harkishen Lal.

The bank opened for business on April 12, 1895, a day before Baisakhi, with an authorised capital of Rs 2 lakh and a paid-up capital of Rs 20,000. The bank did well. For, by December 31, 1895, its paid-up capital rose to Rs 41,500; by December 1896, to Rs 76,960 and by December 31, 1897, to Rs 109,495. Deposits also rose to Rs 165,337 in 1895, and Rs 457,988 in 1896, and Rs 727,447 in 1897. The bank declared a dividend of four per cent in the year 1895, and five per cent in the subsequent two years. The bank had obviously taken off.

However, there were problems. The first problem was the resignation of the first manager, Bulaki Ram Shastri, within five days of confirmation. Within two subsequent years there were differences between the manager, Dalpat Rai, and secretary-cum-director Harkishen Lal. In the case of one loan advanced, it seems, Harkishen Lal had given certain instructions. When the decision was questioned, Dalpat Rai showed Harkishen Lal his written instructions. The latter asked Dalpat Rai to destroy that piece of paper. Dalpat Rai refused and submitted his resignation.

Harkishen Lal, favourite of Dyal Singh, was a very ambitious man. He had his fingers in many a pie. He and Mul Raj had started the Bharat Insurance Company, and had undertaken, without the sanction of the Congress, the construction of a big hall. For all these activities finances were required and he was liberal with instructions. This led to pulls and counterpulls, affecting the working of staff and members whom Dyal Singh expected to work as a team. He felt distressed, and because of certain irregularities in the working of the bank, he submitted his resignation. Harkishen Lal and Mr E.C. Jessawala also sent in their resignations. The Board of Directors, at their meeting on July 18, 1898, had to consider these three resignations. They deferred a decision. The three directors were persuaded to stay on. In the next meeting, on August 12, 1898, the Board met again and resolved that the resignations be considered withdrawn. This was possibly the last meeting which concerned Dyal Singh.

The bank was to make rapid progress and become an institution to be proud of. For, as Lala Harkishen Lal the “confidant and friend of Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia, the proprietor of *The Tribune* newspaper and a



millionaire philanthropist” was to tell the Indian Industrial Commission, presided over by Sir Thomas Holland twenty years later. “The (Anglo-Indian banks) would know their object themselves, but I could say that they did not want Indian banking to flourish, and very likely they thought that, left to itself, it would prove a formidable opponent or competitor to their business... I have a shrewd suspicion that there had been some effort made that banking in India should be the monopoly of a certain class of people, and that, as that monopoly was likely to be broken by the efforts made by Punjabis in banking enterprises, they naturally thought of, and took, whatever steps they could take to destroy it.” He added: “The first bank that we started now exists as the Punjab National Bank. That was started purely on patriotic grounds by people who did not care merely for money. They wanted to start banking and do banking, and they did it.”

## The Will

**D**YAL SINGH'S MANIFOLD activities began to tell on his health. When he turned forty, he started suffering a good deal from pains in the joints. As he had no child of his own, he thought of the assets that he had inherited and developed. He was keen that instead of spending it on building temples and *dharamsalas*, this should be put to the best use for dissemination of knowledge and spread of education a sore need of Punjab plagued by superstition and old customs. Keen that his estate did not suffer the same fate as that of other Sardars, he drafted his last will ably and exhaustively and decided to get his signatures attested by two European officials, to get it registered and deposited in the Registrar's office, through his attorney L. Sangam Lal. It is said that he did all this quietly and did not mention it even to his closest friends.

According to P.N. Kirpal and L.R. Nair, "On the morning of 15th June, 1895, an aristocratic carriage stopped in the porch of the bungalow of Col. Charles Henry Tilson Marshall, ICS, Divisional and Sessions Judge of Lahore. An infirm, prematurely aged, lean and gouty man got out of the carriage with considerable difficulty. He walked slowly into the Colonel's house, supporting himself with two sticks. The man was wearing Indian dress—an imposing turban, a long silk shirt, a long flowing coat and loose pyjamas. His face was broad, his features typically Aryan, and his figure still impressive. He wore a beard and his eyes sparkled between his pale and haggard cheeks.

"A red-coated peon announced Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia to the Divisional and Sessions Judge. Colonel Marshall came out to receive the Sirdar, seated him in the drawing-room and introduced him to his friend, Major William Ronal Clark, I.M.S; Officiating Civil Surgeon of Lahore. The meeting had been arranged by the Sirdar in advance.



“Colonel Marshall enquired about his health from Dyal Singh. The Sirdar said he was very much out of health and had suffered a good deal from gout. He then took out of his pocket a long document which he wanted to be attested by the two European officials. He said that the document was his last will. The document consisted of 12 small-size pages. The Sirdar signed every page before the two officials.”

The officials attested the will. The witnesses did not go through the contents of the will. Shortly after the attestation the Sirdar left with an expression of relief and satisfaction. Major Clark remarked to his friend that the Sirdar appeared to be an old shaky man who certainly had no time to lose in making a will. Colonel Marshall who had seen Dyal Singh in 1865, when Marshall was a Deputy Commissioner and Dyal Singh a student of Mission School at Amritsar, replied that Dyal Singh was failing in health and looked as if he had lived his life.

In his last will and testament, Dyal Singh bequeathed most of his movable and immovable property, inherited or acquired, to a number of beneficiaries which included Sardar Gajendar Singh, his nearest male agnatic relation, his wife Rani Bhagwan Kaur, a certain Mrs Catherine L. Gill, then residing in Karachi, the Mission School in Amritsar and, most importantly, three trusts: the first one set up to run *The Tribune*, the second one to set up an arts college in Lahore and the third one to establish a public library in Lahore.

To Gajendar Singh he bequeathed his inherited lands, houses, gardens in Majitha village and in the city of Amritsar, the whole village of Gallowali in Amritsar district, jewellery, horses, carriages and articles of domestic use, except those in Rani Bhagwan Kaur's possession for personal use. In lieu of the bequest, Gajendar Singh was to look after the maintenance of Rani Bhagwan Kaur during her lifetime in a manner suitable to her rank and condition in life, “showing her every respect, attending to all her comforts, supplying her with cattle milk and such conveyance as he may be in possession of for customary visits to relations and others on occasions of festivity and sorrow, allowing her a suitable residence at Amritsar or Majitha, as she may desire, and paying her for her personal expenses a monthly allowance at the rate of Rs 100 per month”, to provide fodder for the cattle supplied for the use of the Rani and “to pay the wages to two female servants and two male servants who

may attend upon her and serve her." The *jagirs* in perpetuity situated in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts were also bequeathed to Gajendar Singh.

The bulk of the property acquired by his father Lehna Singh or himself, was bequeathed to a nine-member committee of trustees which was asked to establish and maintain a "first class arts college, with or without any school classes, as to the said committee may appear desirable, to be called by such name as the said committee may decide, for the spread and dissemination of a sound liberal education in this province, in which college every attempt shall be made to inculcate pure morality and the principles of Theism consistent with the tenets of Brahmo religion by the personal example of the teaching staff as far as possible, and by instituting a course of lectures and by such other similar means as may to the said committee appear proper and feasible."

The college was to be "thoroughly efficient non-denominational college affiliated to the universities of Calcutta and Punjab... looking after and promoting the physical, mental and moral well-being of the pupils on its rolls. The committee was to attach a suitable boarding-house to the college and a gymnasium."

As this was the time when the Arya Samaj was emerging as a formidable force in Punjab, Dyal Singh laid down that on the college committee or trustees, "none may be appointed who are members of the Arya Samaj" or persons interested in a rival institution or who hold "views and opinions antagonistic to the Brahmo faith."

The second committee of seven trustees was to get erected a suitable building close to the city of Lahore for a public library to be called by such name as the said committee may decide and to purchase, out of the funds provided, books, furniture and other appliances for the said library.

To the third committee of three trustees was bequeathed Dyal Singh's property in the stock and goodwill of *The Tribune* press and newspaper in Anarkali, Lahore. It was the duty of the committee of trustees "to maintain the said press and newspaper in an efficient condition, keeping up the liberal policy of the said newspaper and devoting the surplus income of the said press and newspaper, after defraying all current expenses, in improving the said newspaper and placing it on a footing of permanency."

The nine-member committee of trustees of the proposed college, the



seven-member committee of trustees which was to set up a public library, and the three-member committee of trustees which was to look after *The Tribune* press and newspaper, had three members who figured in all the three committees. These three were Babu Jogendra Chandra Bose, pleader Chief Court, Lahore; Mr Charles Golak Nath, Bar-at-Law, Lahore; and Lala Harkishen Lal, Bar-at-Law, Lahore.

The other six trustees of the nine-member committee of trustees for the proposed arts college, included Lala Ruchi Ram Sahni, Assistant Professor, Government College, Lahore; Babu Shashi Bhushan Mukherjee, Professor, Government College, Lahore; Dewan Narindra Nath, District Magistrate, Montgomery; Mr Golak Nath Chatterjee, Assistant Professor, Government College, Lahore; Lala Sunder Das Suri, Assistant Superintendent, Training College, Lahore; Babu Avinash Chandra Majumdar, of the North Western Railway Office, Lahore. The other four members of the seven-member committee of trustees for the public library included Lala Shib Dyal, of the Aitchison College, Lahore; Lala Sardha Ram, Government pensioner, Lahore; Lala Sunder Das, Assistant Superintendent, Training College, Lahore; and Lala Kanshi Ram, of the Punjab Brahmo Samaj.

It would be seen that of the dozen trustees, half were from Bengal, and that all trustees were drawn from the legal or teaching profession, and were followers of Brahmo Samaj. There was not a single Arya Samaji or Sikh.

## For a College

**D**YALSINGH'S FRIEND Ruchi Ram Sahni narrated that he had once suggested to the Sirdar that he might give away his whole fortune for the foundation of a college at Lahore. "My request to him was to found the college himself. And I remember mentioning to him, that either during his lifetime or after his death, the college might be called after his own name. He was very angry at the suggestion, and said that I wanted to bribe him in this way, so that he might agree to my suggestion. It must have taken not less than four or five years' continuous persuasion on my part to make Sirdar Dyal Singh agree to my suggestion."

The city of Lahore had a Government College. But the success of the D.A.V. College at Lahore, of the Aligarh Muslim University and of the Brahmo City College at Calcutta had shown the need for the establishment of yet another college at Lahore. When Dyal Singh's friends impressed upon him the need for the establishment of a college, he seemed to appreciate the idea but felt that this should be preceded by the establishment of a theistic mission and a boarding-house. He gave money for starting such a house. It was named the Brahmo Ashram. The inmates of this Ashram later came to occupy very high places in society in the Punjab. An important feature of the boarding-house was a brief devotional service in the evening, lasting not more than twenty minutes, when two or three songs were sung, some of the leading Brahmos being asked to conduct the service by turns. In every other respect the Brahmo Ashram was like any ordinary boarding-house.

As Dyal Singh was lukewarm to the idea of setting up a college, some of his friends, including Ruchi Ram Sahni, Prof. Chawla and Ramanand Chatterjee, planned to start a college with such slender resources as they could muster and funds raised by the public. These three, forming a



nucleus, decided to take only subsistence allowance. This proposal encouraged Dyal Singh to give serious thought to starting a college. The principal hurdle in starting a college was the difficulty of getting a suitable principal. Dyal Singh invited Sivanath Sastri, Hiranmoy Chunder Moitra and Protap Chunder Mozumdar to Lahore to explore the possibility of fixing a good principal. Each one of them visited Lahore three or four times, and Dyal Singh discussed with them the need for identification of some one who could make the success of the proposed college the business of his life. The three were requested to take on the responsibility as principal, rector, or in some other capacity.

According to Sivanath Sastri, “a few years before his death, Dyal Singh invited me to come to the Punjab to have a conference with him about starting a theistic mission for that province. We discussed the project of starting a mission with an educational institution attached to it. The foundation of a mission home was a part of it.”

Mr Hiranmoy Chunder Moitra, who also visited Lahore, was then the professor of English at the Brahmo City College and also the right-hand man of Omesh Chunder Dutt, the principal (whom later he succeeded). The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj could not spare his services for the proposed college at Lahore, which meant getting restricted to the work of one arts college and narrow confines of a provincial capital, when they actually operated on an all-India scale or even outside. Rev. Protap Chunder Mozumdar, who stayed as Dyal Singh's guest from April 22 to May 11, 1895, in the rooms then known as the “barracks” and later the site of the Dyal Singh Public Library, inaugurated a theistic mission in Lahore. The two discussed the project of a college at great length, and sometimes were closeted from four to five hours at a stretch. When Dyal Singh offered him the principalship of the college, Mozumdar declined the offer, because he felt that the Lahore assignment would be too narrow a field for his activities. Mozumdar helped the Sirdar draw up his will, and advised the setting up of a library,

By June 1895, however, Dyal Singh seems to have made up his mind to pursue the project for the establishment of a college. In fact, shortly before his death he had started negotiating for the purchase of two plots for the building of a college (The area, of course, was about fifty *bighas*, which in those times was thought to be enough to start a college) and in

his will he bequeathed the bulk of his properties spread over three districts to the trust that was to set up the college. One day he told Ruchi Ram Sahni that he had made a will and that he was to be one of the trustees of the proposed college.

On February 1, 1897, he started a high school which then was named the Union Academy. *The Tribune* on February 1, 1897, quoted a report from the *Advocate* : "Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia, whose name is connected with many good movements in the Punjab, has set on foot another very useful movement which will result in conferring everlasting boon to the young of the Punjab. He proposes to open a school named the Union Academy from February 1, to impart education of non-sectarian or non-denominational character. An efficient staff of teachers, all graduates of the Calcutta University, has been secured for the high and middle-classes. All honour to the Sirdar for the noble effort in the cause of education." For the post of headmaster of the Academy he had invited Nand Lal Sen, a cousin of Keshub Chunder Sen, to leave the Hiranand Academy, a well-known Brahmo School at Hyderabad Sindh, to join him. The Hiranand Academy had established a great reputation within a few years, and was considered a unique institution, not only in Sindh but all over India. A notable feature of the Academy was its emphasis on character-building. Nand Lal Sen, as a teacher of English, was known for the fund of stories of adventure of the highest order, judiciously selected, chiefly from European history. Of an exceedingly retiring nature and maintaining distance from his students, Nand Lal Sen had created the impression of a saintly person who exercised great influence on his students by sheer force of character.

Among the teachers selected for the Union Academy were a galaxy of very promising young men, e.g. Balak Ram, M.A., who, subsequently, distinguished himself as a wrangler at Cambridge, entered the ICS and became judge of the Bombay High Court, or Rai Saheb Kaushal Chand Thukral, who later became a public prosecutor at Lahore, or Labhu Ram, who distinguished himself as a pleader. Despite distinguished staff, the Union Academy, in the beginning, did not attract many students, despite the fact that in those days there were no inter-school migration rules, no school leaving certificates to be obtained; no necessity of seeking recognition of schools from the Education Department; it was a time when one



could just leave any school and join any other at any time. One reason for the poor enrolment at the Union Academy was that the posters announcing the opening of the Academy, stuck at the city gates of Lahore, were torn away by mischievous students. The matter was reported to Dyal Singh, who asked his friends, among them Ruchi Ram Sahni, to leave no stone unturned to make the school popular, with the promise that all bills of expenditure incurred for the purpose be sent to him for disbursement. *The Tribune* announced remission of fees for three months, as an incentive.

A large number of attractive posters, were got printed to publicise the opening of a new and up to date school and were pasted at important points all over the city, especially in the well-populated areas. For this purpose, the city was divided into several wards and one person assisted by two coolies to carry and paste the posters, was deputed to each ward. The coolies were also assigned the task of patrolling the *mohallas* and putting up two posters when one was torn off. The campaign was continued for a week. And the result was that all the available seats in the Academy were filled.

In his will Dyal Singh did not provide funds for the Union Academy. He willed his vast fortune to the trust to set up a first-rate arts college, with or without school classes. And it was the trust that renamed the Union Academy as Dyal Singh School, and later started the college named after him.

## The End

**O**F THE TWO European officials who had witnessed the will of Dyal Singh, on June 15, 1895, one had observed that Dyal Singh “certainly had no time to lose in making a will,” and the other that it looked as if “he had lived his life”. In the following months he was in rather poor health. Deceived by his princely presence, no one felt that there was any cause for anxiety. Then on August 25, 1898, he had a touch of rheumatic fever. None of his relations was with him. In fact, Dyal Singh had issued instructions that Bhagwan Kaur was not to be summoned to his bedside. Catherine Gill who had been in Lahore too had gone back to Karachi. Only some Brahmo friends were with him. Khan Saheb Dr Mohammed Hussain Khan attended on him as usual. Then erysipelas of the right leg set in. Eminent physician Dr Beli Ram was called in. The Sirdar's temperature was high; he grew weaker and weaker. On September 3, 1898, the case was put in the hands of Dr Cunningham, the Civil Surgeon of Lahore. Also available (on Sundays) were Dyal Singh's close friend and medical adviser Dr Sahib Ditta Mal, the Civil Surgeon of Gurdaspur, and his son, Dr Bihari Lal Dhingra, M.D. who attended on Dyal Singh daily. Thanks to medical aid, there was some apparent improvement. The temperature came down. The inflammation too came down considerably. On September 7, however, deep congestion of the liver set in and then he was in coma. There was no rally after this. On September 8, the doctors gave up hope. “His coma deepened, and the heart became weaker and weaker till 2.50 p.m. on September 9, 1898, when the great Sirdar peacefully fell asleep for ever”. According to Harkishen Lal, “the Sirdar had the same composure in his life and seemed to have died without any remorse or regret.”

It was decided by the relations, friends and well-wishers of Sirdar



Dyal Singh that the body of the Sirdar be cremated in the grounds at the back of his own house. A deputation consisting of the Rases of the city and Mr Harkishen Lal, Charles Golak Nath and Ruchi Ram Sahni waited on the Commissioner, Mr Burt, for permission to cremate the Sirdar's body in the grounds of his house. This was granted.

"The city was deeply moved when it heard the news, and in a short time the bungalow was crowded with sorrowing people of all classes. The assembled members of the aristocracy, headed by Raja Harbans Singh, were as deeply affected as others, and seemed to fully realise the fact that they had that day lost a bright ornament of their order. The last rites were performed in the compound of the *haveli*, and in that vast mourning throng there was no eye that was dry, as the widowed Rani took her last farewell of the departed lord and the fire was applied to pyre."\* A part of the ashes was buried at the site, to be removed later to the proposed college and the remaining sent for immersion in the Ganges.

Although *akhand path* was organised, no particular Sikh or Brahmo rites were observed. In fact "very great care was taken to give prominence to Hindu rites and usages in connection with the funeral ceremonies", Lala Harkishen Lal, supported by Charles Golak Nath, considered this important "in view of the difficulties which were expected to arise (and in fact did arise) in connection with his will."

It has not been possible to gather further details about the observances relating to his death, or the tributes paid to him. However, warm tributes were certainly paid on the occasion by his childhood playmate Raja Harbans Singh and his close friends Pratul Chandra Chatterjee, Harkishen Lal, Charles Golak Nath, Jogendra Chandra Bose and Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni.

That night his Brahmo friend Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, and Dyal Singh's lawyer friend Sangam Lal slept on the *thara* in Dyal Singh's house with "locks, sealing wax, seal and tapes." The two managed to lock and seal the main rooms where, they thought, the account books, valuable documents and jewellery were kept. As anticipated, servants of the Sirdar, led by his treasurer Bhanga Singh, came in a body to attack the two

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\* This report in *The Tribune* was reproduced by *The Bengalee*, Calcutta. *The Tribune's* file for 1898 is missing.

friends. They were appeased when they were asked to put their own locks and seals also.

The news of the Sirdar's demise was sent to Mrs Gill then at Karachi, and she arrived in Lahore after three days.

*The Tribune* dated September 15, 1898, paid a well-deserved tribute to its founder. However, it is symptomatic of the Anglo-Indians' attitude towards Indians at the time that the rival *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, which often referred in derogatory terms to the "Rattan Chand Road contemporary" did not have the courtesy of publishing an obituary of Congressman Dyal Singh. The only reference made seems to have been the publication on September 17, 1898, of a letter to the editor from one signing himself as "Indignant", the letter asking as to who authorised the cremation of Sirdar Dyal Singh in the rear of his house!

It appeared on the day as Surendranath Banerjea's *The Bengalee* of Calcutta had written: "He was one of the wealthiest of the Sikh Sardars, but his wealth was freely devoted to public service. He was the leader and pioneer of all those great public movements in the Punjab, which brought that province in a line with the rest of India. He was associated with the establishment of the Indian Association at Lahore; he readily took up the idea of providing the Punjab with a newspaper which should be the faithful organ of Indian public opinion, and spent a fortune in founding *The Tribune* newspaper. If *The Tribune* has now become a power in the land, it is due to his great public spirit and self-sacrificing devotion. When it was proposed to him to hold the Congress in the Punjab, Sirdar Dyal Singh placed himself at the head of the movement, and was elected chairman of the Reception Committee. Though suffering from an illness which should have confined him to bed, he was there on the Congress platform ready to welcome the delegates. He was, in short, the leader of all popular movements in the Punjab. The death of Sirdar Dyal Singh is a great and irreparable loss to the Punjab; it is a loss to all India for, in the unfortunate times upon which we are fallen, men of the type of Sirdar Dyal Singh are rare."

Three months later, the annual session of the Indian National Congress passed a resolution to say that "we mourn the loss of the great Sikh nobleman of the Punjab, Sirdar Dyal Singh, whose active support given to the Congress won for him the esteem of his countrymen, and whose



munificent bequests for advancing the cause of education, and in aid of various institutions, have made his name memorable throughout the Indian Empire.”

And when the Congress met again at Lahore for its sixteenth session it remembered his contribution at the 1893 session and said in a resolution : “He has been cut off in the prime of life, and his death is a national loss. His public spirit, patriotic ideals, and liberal and enlightened principles were like a beacon light to the people of the Punjab. He was their natural leader. His last will and testament is a standing monument to his name. By this he has given away his whole immense estate to the public cause. It sets an example to other noblemen of India how to utilise their wealth for the good of their country and countrymen.”

## Epilogue

THE STORY OF one's life normally ends with the passing away of the person. But not for what may be called the saga of Dyal Singh. It continued for at least half a century, if not more, after his death. On September 12, 1898, on an application by Sardar Gajendar Singh, his cousin, Dyal Singh's will was opened by B.H. Bird, the acting Registrar, Lahore, in the presence of Harkishen Lal and Jogendra Chandra Bose. On February 18, 1899, the beneficiaries or executors applied for the grant of probate. Not only did Dyal Singh's widow, Rani Bhagwan Kaur; Gajendar Singh; another relative Attar Singh and Catherine Gill and others contest the will, they also adopted what may be called a grab-what-you-can policy. Rani Bhagwan Kaur employed Sultan Bux, well-versed in the ways of the British Indian courts, to help her in getting possession of Dyal Singh's assets. She agreed to pay him a sum of two lakh rupees—a hefty sum in 1899—if he succeeded in the job assigned to him. The first target was *The Tribune* newspaper and press. Through intermediaries the Rani and editor Nagendranath Gupta entered into an agreement that the latter would help her in getting possession of the newspaper and the press, and, as a quid pro quo, she would later transfer the newspaper, press and types etc. to Nagendranath Gupta on payment of a sum of rupees ten thousand only. Neither the Rani nor Nagendranath Gupta took into account the fact that the press was under the manager, Ram Chand, a loyal employee of the Sirdar, who was in touch with the executors of the will. Harkishen Lal, Ruchi Ram Sahni and Charles Golak Nath, by a clever stratagem, forestalled any action by the Rani's agents, and took possession of the press and the newspaper.

Nagendranath Gupta was furious but felt helpless. The Rani's repre-



sentatives admitted defeat. ‘*The Tribune*’, says *A history of The Tribune*, “was saved from a tricky sale and a conspiracy hatched by Gupta and the Rani's agents. But for the timely move made by Lala Harkishen Lal, Mr Charles Golak Nath and Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, the history of this newspaper might have been different.”

Catherine Gill, who had come to Lahore three days after Dyal Singh's death went over to Batala, where she, assuming the name of Rani Lachhman Kaur, took possession of Dyal Singh's *haveli*. With the help of the strong Christian mission and community of Batala, this white woman also took possession of Dyal Singh's lands in the nearby villages e.g. Mirza Jan and realised revenue. Rani Bhagwan Kaur's agents also took possession of some of the properties of Dyal Singh.

The application for the grant of probate, filed by Jogendra Chandra Bose and other plaintiffs, was contested by Gajendar Singh, Rani Bhagwan Kaur, Attar Singh, Catherine Gill (who said it was not the Sirdar's last will) and others. Later on, Gajendar Singh, Attar Singh and even Catherine Gill left it to Rani Bhagwan Kaur to contest the case. Counsel for Rani Bhagwan Kaur and Dyal Singh's old servants, now in the pay of Bhagwan Kaur, put forward the plea that Dyal Singh had taken to excessive drinking and dissipation and as a result, had become mentally weak, that he was not a Hindu, but a Sikh, that he was surrounded by Brahmo preachers who had isolated him from his family and community and influenced him to deny his wife and relations of what was their due. They said that he was not a Hindu because he ate with Christians, Muslims and others, ate beef and that he had become a Brahmo. All this was put forward as arguments in the context of the applicability of the Indian Succession Act of 1881 and the Probate and Administration Act 1881.

After prolonged arguments, the Chief Court at Lahore, on April 19, 1900, ruled that Dyal Singh was a Hindu, which included Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, and that he had not abandoned his faith to embrace Brahmoism. About the attempts at blackening his character by the servants now in the employment of Rani Bhagwan Kaur, the Court said they had lied, that Catherine Gill's evidence was not trustworthy etc. The Chief Court held the will valid and granted probate. The three executors who were the trustees of *The Tribune* formally took over *The Tribune*. Nagendranath Gupta was dismissed from service. Rani Bhagwan Kaur went up in appeal

against the Chief Court's judgement to the Privy Council. The Privy Council heard the case on June 16 and 17 and August 5, 1903, and recommended that the appeal be dismissed.

Meantime, the properties which had been bequeathed by Dyal Singh and forcibly taken possession of by Rani Bhagwan Kaur, Catherine Gill and others were neglected and deteriorated. To get them back, the trusts set up by Dyal Singh in his will had to take recourse to prolonged litigation against Bhagwan Kaur and Catherine Gill. Several attempts were made to bring about a compromise between Rani Bhagwan Kaur and the members of the three trusts. Thanks to Thakur Maha Chand's mediation these efforts succeeded. Said an editorial in *The Tribune* on September 8, 1907:

“The terms of the compromise which duly received the sanction of the Chief Court are lengthy and matters of detail concerning as they do a vast and princely estate, and into them we shall not go. Suffice it to say that it has been agreed that the Rani Saheba will receive a maintenance allowance of Rs 450 per mensem for her lifetime, subject to no conditions whatsoever, beginning with March 1, 1906, over and above the rights which the will gives to her, and two villages have been set apart to safeguard the necessary amount during the Rani Saheba's lifetime. And further, the Rani Saheba receives Rs 15,000 for payment of her liabilities and of balance of pay of her servants. This sum includes Rs 2,000 to be paid by her for past long services rendered by the old servants of the family. Another Rs 6,000 is to be paid to the Rani Saheba in cash to defray the expenses of pilgrimage to Gaya and of the Gadaura ceremony of the deceased Sirdar. Sardar Gajendar Singh receives two *mauzas* named Nawabad and Dyalpur to be enjoyed by himself and his heirs over and above the properties and rights secured to him by the will. Another sum of Rs 7,000 is to be paid by the executors to Sardar Gajendar Singh and others, as agreed. These are, we understand, the main items in which the public are interested... It is a matter of the deepest satisfaction that the long and tiresome vista of litigation—going up to the Privy Council and involving huge expenses and appalling waste of public money—has disappeared.”

The properties left by the will (as modified by the terms of the compromise agreement with the heirs of the testator) for the purpose of establishment and maintenance of the college, consisted of 25 houses



situated in the city of Lahore and one in Karachi; 5129 *bighas* of village lands in Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts; shares in joint stock companies of nominal value of Rs 1,00,380. Assets were valued at about Rs 30 lakh. As laid down by the testator the college trust committee sold the house in Karachi (where Catherine Gill had stayed) and, with its proceeds, purchased a plot of land measuring 83 *bighas* situated on the Mian Mir road. For about two years the three trusts held combined meetings. Later, when the Dyal Singh College trust was registered under the law, the first meeting of the college trust society was held on December 9, 1900. Dyal Singh College was first set up in the house where Dyal Singh had lived, on May 3, 1910. It later shifted to its own premises where it celebrated its silver jubilee in 1935.

In 1923, Dyal Singh Library trust sold the building named "The Exchange", on Mall Road in Lahore, for Rs 4,23,000 to the Sir Ganga Ram trust and with the proceeds, set up the Dyal Singh Public Library on Nisbet Road, to which shifted the temporarily set up reading room and library. It occupied the new premises in 1928, or thirty years after the death of Dyal Singh.

When partition came on August 15, 1947, *The Tribune* had served the Punjab for 66 years, the Dyal Singh College for 37 years and the Dyal Singh Library for nearly 20 years. The Radcliffe Line that divided India and the new Dominion of Pakistan introduced a new element. Trustees of *The Tribune* decided that, regardless of the far-reaching changes in the political set up, *The Tribune* would continue to be published from Lahore, the paper also having a Jullundur edition after normalcy was restored. They hoped *The Tribune* would serve as an unofficial liaison between the majority and minority communities of the subcontinent. While pledging its support to the new state of Pakistan, it was to maintain its efforts to eliminate the venom of communal hatred which had been injected into the body politic. However, looting, arson and murders or threats of murder of members of the staff made it decide to migrate from Lahore, leaving behind valuable property including land, building, composing, printing and other machinery and newsprint stock worth Rs two lakh. The assets, at a conservative estimate totalled Rs 30 lakh.

On the timely advice of the General Manager of the Punjab National Bank (with which *The Tribune* maintained an account since the time of

Dyal Singh), cash reserves amounting to Rs 10 lakh were transferred from Lahore to Delhi just five days before the partition became effective. The Trust had also Government securities worth Rs 25 lakh. Again luckily for the paper, it had ordered a rotary press, which was then on the high seas, making for Karachi. Its delivery was now arranged in Bombay. Thus *The Tribune* started from Simla its edition in India after six weeks then shifted to Ambala Cantonment and, after a few years, to Chandigarh. The Indian Press Year Book for the year 1948 observed : "Few things could be sadder in the history of the Indian Press than the circumstances in which long-established organs like *The Tribune* had to transfer themselves from the hallowed seats of their meritorious labours and to start from a new place."

Since *The Tribune* shifted to Chandigarh, it has flourished. In 1978, it also started editions in Hindi and Punjabi. Three years later, in 1981 it celebrated its centenary with great fanfare. It has a large circulation and holds a monopoly in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The affairs of the paper are overseen by the five-member Trust consisting of (1) Dr P.N. Chhuttani, (2) Mr D.K. Mahajan, (3) Mr R.S. Talwar, (4) Mr B.K. Nehru and (5) Mrs Serla Grewal. The trustees don't interfere in the professional conduct of the three newspapers. *The Tribune* is the only newspaper in the country which has built a prestigious residential colony worth a few crores for members of its staff, and has done much better than the two institutions in India which bear the name of Dyal Singh.

One of these is Dyal Singh College at Karnal, which started literally from a scratch in India. The only assets that it could retrieve were the Government securities of the Trust that Dewan Anand Kumar, Secretary of the Trust, could manage to bring to India. And it was due to the personal initiative and efforts of Dewan Anand Kumar, who was also Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab University, that it became possible to acquire from the Government the evacuee property named Ummar Manzil at Karnal with ample space for playgrounds etc. for setting up the Dyal Singh College at Karnal on September 16, 1949. Today the college, affiliated to the Kurukshetra University, is one of the leading institutions in Haryana. It has on its rolls some 2,700 students. The affairs of the college are managed under the guidance of an eight-member board of trustees, consisting at present of (1) Mr Dalip Singh, IRS (Retd.); (2) Dewan Gajendra



Kumar; (3) Mr Justice Dalip K. Kapur, Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court (Retd.); (4) Mr Mantosh Sondhi; (5) Mr B.K. Nehru, ICS (Retd.); (6) Mr C.K. Sawhney, IPS (Retd.); (7) Mr R.C. Sharma, IPS; and (8) Mr Ashok Bhan.

On the initiative of Dewan Anand Kumar again, Dyal Singh College was set up at Lodhi Road, New Delhi in 1958. It started with evening classes and morning classes in the following year. Later on the Trust Society handed over the college and all its assets to the Delhi Administration.

The other institution bearing the name of Dyal Singh is the Dyal Singh Public Library set up in the institutional area off Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, New Delhi. Run by the Dyal Singh Public Library Trust Society, consisting of (1) Dewan Gajendra Kumar; (2) Mr B.K. Nehru, ICS (Retd.); (3) Mr V.P. Dutt, former Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University; (4) Mr P.N. Kirpal, Secretary, Ministry of Education (Retd.) and (5) Dalip K. Kapur, Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court (Retd.), it has a stock of 28,000 books, which includes the personal libraries of Dewan Anand Kumar, the son of Raja Narendra Nath, a live-wire personality in the days of Dyal Singh.

While *The Tribune* and its premises in Lahore were taken over by those who started the *Pakistan Times*, the educational institutions of the Dyal Singh Trust in Lahore were taken over by Punjab Government. The College, later named Government Dyal Singh College, is now under the control of the Punjab Education Department. Hearing that the Chemistry Department set up in 1917, was in a bad way, and that there was a great demand (there being 500 first-year science students and 80 B.Sc. students in 1984 as against a mere 20 in 1917), the then President of Pakistan approved a special grant of Rs 10 lakh for its renovation. The dilapidated building of the College was also repaired and a new Chemistry Block built. The move to delete the name of Dyal Singh from Dyal Singh Government College was dropped. The College has 3,000 students and 100 teachers today.

The Dyal Singh Public Library suffered a good deal of damage. A large number of books and many pieces of furniture were destroyed. It remained closed for many years. The Federal Evacuee Trust Property Board of the Government of Pakistan decided to reopen it in 1964. The

Dyal Singh Trust Library in Lahore is today managed by a ten-member committee consisting of the Chairman and Secretary of the Federal Evacuee Trust Property Board; Secretary, Department of Education, Punjab Government; Director General of Public Libraries; Principals of Government College, Lahores, Kinnard College, Lahore College for Women, Government Dyal Singh College and Secretary, Dyal Singh Trust Library. Over the years the Library has grown. The number of books has risen from 32,833 in 1947 to 1,48,282 in 1992. It has a research and publication cell which started functioning in 1972. The Library's aim is to be as good as library in Pakistan as the Quaid-i-Azam, the most modern library located in what once was the Gymkhana Club, Lahore. Its annual grant has been increased to Rs 22 lakh a year, Rs 15 lakh for books and Rs 5 lakh for machinery and equipment. The late President Zia-ul-Haq had ordered that the entire immovable property of the Dyal Singh Trusts be transferred to the Punjab Government. As the prestigious properties of the Trusts were located in Lahore, where the rentals were high, there was a case for five-fold increase in the rentals.

Besides the college and library the other important institution namely, the Punjab National Bank that does not bear Dyal Singh's name but certainly bears the stamp of his personality, has done extremely well in India. While the institutions run by the two Trusts set up by him in his will, stayed on in Lahore, the Punjab National Bank took note of developing situation on the eve of independence and decided to shift its headquarters from Lahore to Delhi. There was opposition from certain quarters, on the ground that whereas the bank's branches in Punjab numbered 190, those in Delhi area numbered only 12, and also that the name was Punjab National Bank. The bank's luminaries pointed out that the bank was now an all-India bank, and had branches all over India. Delhi being a central place it was suited to be the location of its head office for the sake of efficiency and economy.

According to announcement on June 29, 1947, "the shareholders and constituents of the bank in particular and the public in general are hereby informed that the registered office of the Punjab National Bank Limited has been shifted from Lahore, in the Punjab province of British India, to Tropical Building, Connaught Circus, New Delhi, in the province of Delhi, with effect from June 26, 1947, in pursuance of the special reso-



lution passed by the company on May 10, 1947, to this effect, duly sanctioned and confirmed by an order dated June 19, 1947, of the High Court of Judicature of Lahore, under Section 12 of the Indian Companies Act.”

After the shifting of the bank to Delhi, it has indeed flourished and won several awards. As against 281 branches in 1946, the bank today has 3373 branches including 282 extension countrs. Its paid-up capital in 1946 was Rs 87.50 lakh. Its capital fund in 1993 was Rs 187.8 crore, its working capital Rs 21106 crore and its owned funds Rs 548.8 crore. Its deposits rose from Rs 6202.30 lakh in 1946 to Rs. 18241 crore in 1993. It claims to occupy the top position amongst nationalised banks in the number of branches, in the aggregate deposits and in regard to advances made. The bank's profit in 1993 totalled Rs 110 crore. Reduced by 66.2 per cent ``due to adherence to income recognition, asset classification and provisioning norms" it came to Rs 38 crore.

Of people who wielded power during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh—the Dogra Rajas, the Sandhanwallias, Attariwala and Mann Sardars, the Gaur Brahmins of U.P. and Kashmiri Pandits—there are not many who are remembered today. With the passing away of Dyal Singh, the last male descendant of Lehna Singh, son of Desa Singh, who was the only son of Nodh Singh, the family of the most important chief of Majitha's Shergil jats, came to an end. For, Gajendar Singh, the only other male descendant, died in 1908 at the age of 43, leaving behind a widow Harnam Kaur. The only legacy that the family could thus claim was the legacy left behind by Dyal Singh in the shape (now) of three educational institutions of higher learning, two public libraries serving the cause of education and dissemination of knowledge in the two countries of the Indian subcontinent, the 113-year-old *The Tribune* (now from Chandigarh) and the Punjab National Bank, among the most important financial institutions in the country today. No mean legacy this!





# Chronology

## (1848-1898)

1848 Born in Kashi (Banaras)

1854 July 25, Father Lehna Singh's death.

Mother's death.

Leaves Kashi for Majitha village. Lehna Singh's estate entrusted to court of wards headed by Raja Tej Singh  
Dyal Singh lives at Batala and Kangra.

Attends Mission School at Amritsar.

Marries daughter of Sher Singh of Ambala.

1864 October 18, Attends Viceregal durbar at Lahore; *nazr* and *khillat*

1865 Handsome donation to the Gymkhana Club, Lahore.

1869 Court of wards terminated.

Dyal Singh appointed Honorary Magistrate, Amritsar.

1871 Edits and publishes *Naghma-i-Tamboori*

1874 Seen at a fancy fair in Lawrence Gardens, Lahore. Sails to United Kingdom.

1875 *Rahat-i-Haqiqi* published at Amritsar.

Visits Paris.

1877 June 5, Meets Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

June 8, Receives Surendranath Banerjea in Amritsar.

- 1878 February 16, Reception to Dyal Singh by the Indian Association, Calcutta at the garden house of Raja Ramaprasad Roy.  
 September 6, Town Hall meeting of Indian Association appoints him a member of the steering committee to monitor the operation of the Vernacular Press Act.  
*Kashif-ul-Ilham* published at Lahore.  
*Khuda Mohabbat Hai Ya Qahar* published at Lahore.
- 1879 January 23, Attends foundation-stone laying ceremony of the Brahmo Samaj Mandir in Calcutta.
- 1880 February 23, Brahmo Samaj set up at Amritsar.  
 July 21, Brahmo Samaj Mandir at Amritsar established.
- 1881 October 26, Memorial to Government of India regarding Punjab University.  
 February 2, *The Tribune* started.
- 1884 January 27, Receives Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan at Lahore.  
 February 3, Presents welcome address to Sir Sayyid Ahmed.  
 Among first 10 members of Punjab Public Library, Lahore.  
 October 16, *The Tribune* becomes a biweekly.  
 December, Attends Theosophical Society's convention at Adyar.
- 1888 December, Attends the annual session of Indian National Congress at Allahabad; seconds the election of George Yule.
- 1890 August-November, Defamation case filed by Superintendent of Police Warburton.
- 1893 December 27, Welcomes delegates to the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Lahore, as Chairman of the Reception Committee.  
 Pamphlet on Nationalism.



- 1895 April 22 to May 11, Plays host to Rev. P.C. Mozumdar.  
June 15, Will registered with the Registrar at Lahore.
- 1897 February 1, Union Academy founded.  
November, Meeting with Swami Vivekananda.
- 1898 January 11, *The Tribune* becomes a triweekly (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday).  
September 9, Death at Lahore.  
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- 1898 September 12, The will opened.
- 1899 February 18, Application for grant of probate.
- 1900 April 19, Probate granted by Chief Court, Lahore.
- 1903 August 5, Privy Council's judgement upholding Chief Court's decision.  
Prolonged litigation over properties, grabbed by relations and friends.
- 1906 December 1, Compromise negotiated by Thakur Maha Chand of Amritsar, giving some *mauzas* to cousin Gajendar Singh, and others to Rani Bhagwan Kaur, plus some cash compensation, filed in the Court of Rai Chunilal.  
*The Tribune* becomes a daily.
- 1907 September 7, Editorial in *The Tribune* marking the end of litigation.





## Appendix

### **Text of the address of Sirdar Dyal Singh Majithia in his capacity as Chairman of the reception committee for the Indian National Congress Session, Lahore (1893)**

Ladies, Gentlemen and Fellow-delegates,

It has fallen to me on behalf of the Reception Committee of the Ninth Indian National Congress to accord a cordial welcome to the delegates of the Ninth Indian National Congress to the capital of our Province and in doing so I cannot help feeling an overpowering sense of glory and pride such as I have never before experienced in my life. It is our peculiar good fortune to live under a Government which, by the spread of liberal education and the annihilation of distances, has made it practicable for us—the inhabitants of the remote parts of this vast empire—to meet every year at different centres to discuss those great problems so intimately connected with the advancement and prosperity of our fatherland. We have a glorious past of course of which we need to be proud, and we clearly see the prospect of a hopeful future before us under the benign influence of British rule, and I think most of us present here believe that the kingdom of heaven is not behind us but before us. The darkness that enshrouded the land for so many centuries has begun to be dispelled, and the streaks are already visible above the horizon that herald the approach of a glorious dawn.

A hundred years ago, when Lord Cornwallis was laying the foundations of the empire on a solid basis, the country, as a whole, was still in a state of disorder and anarchy. Two generations later witnessed the advent of that illustrious nobleman, Lord William Bentinck, who first sowed the seeds which fell fast on the fertile soil and germinated vigorously, and watered by the generous hand of Lord Halifax, and warmed by the establishment of universities sprouted forth into luxuriant growth. The crisis that followed, in 1857, enveloped the empire in momentary

gloom but this speedily passed away and the car of progress began once more to glide smoothly and rapidly along, propelled by the genial force imparted by that great statesman who in a moment of imminent peril safely guided the vessel of State to her moorings—the immortal Canning. A generation later, appeared on the scene that liberal-minded ruler, that candid friend, that cordial sympathiser, that suppressor of wrong and supporter of the weak and the downtrodden, the best and the most illustrious of Viceroys, the righteous Ripon to whom we owe the amalgam that united the scattered units of the Indian nation and stimulated those national sentiments and aspirations of which the Indian National Congress is the direct outcome. The National Congress—the greatest glory of the British rule in this country—thus started has had its sittings at the principal centres of Indian intelligence and progress. But this is its first session in this Province, and it rouses our deepest emotions and stirs up our innermost feelings to be able to give it a hearty greeting and to have an opportunity to show the rites of hospitality to those who at considerable personal risk and sacrifice have undertaken distant journeys and assembled under this roof for furthering the cause of their country. This is the second attempt that has been made towards holding the Congress in the Punjab. The first attempt was made at Allahabad in 1888 when the delegates from this Province offered to invite the next Congress to Lahore but that attempt was infructuous because some of our leaders having recently had experience of the opposition that the Congress had met in the North-Western Provinces entertained apprehensions of greater and more serious difficulties being thrown in our way in this Province. We are glad, however, to say that no such apprehensions have visited us on the present occasion. We now live under the strong regime of a wise and dispassionate ruler who, as an ex-Judge of one of the highest tribunals in this country, takes a judicious view of questions, and does not allow himself to be carried away by executive impulses or administrative theories. It gives us much pleasure to express our sense of obligation to Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick personally, in spite of the resolution of the Punjab Government on the now famous circular letter of our Director of Public Instruction for his fair attitude towards the Congress, to tender our thanks to local officials who, taking their cue from their chief, have offered no opposition but have rather treated us with courtesy during the time that preparations were



going on for the Congress. Comparison is odious and I shall, therefore, avoid it as far as possible, but all those who were present at Allahabad in 1888 and heard the speech of the late lamented Pandit Ajudhia Nath, in his capacity of President of the Reception Committee, will be able to form a contrast in their minds as to the circumstances under which the fourth Congress was held and has now assembled here. The fact that this is a frontier and younger province only lends additional vigour to the contrast and reflects greater credit on the head of the local administration.

It has been asserted that the Congress is a Babu-movement and the martial races of India have no sympathy with it. This great assembly is a living refutation of all assertions of that description. The Congress has already had two sittings at Allahabad and on each occasion the hearty and active adherence which the people of the N.W. Provinces and Oudh have shown to the cause speaks for itself. It is true that the Congress has never been held here previous to this occasion, but it was not because the people of this Province did not feel any interest in this national movement and appreciated it duly, but on account of the apprehended difficulties I have alluded to before. It is impossible and quite unnatural that in the midst of the general national reawakening the Punjab alone should lie steeped in torpor.

The East gave light to the West in old antiquity, but the light so given has come back reflected in greater brightness, and its revivifying influence is felt from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. To suppose that the Punjab has held aloof from the Congress is absurd. Is it possible that those credited with possessing most fire in their blood should be the least susceptible to this influence?

No, the wand of the magician has touched our eyes. The history and literature of England have permeated our minds, the great heritage of our Western Aryan brethren has descended on us collaterally as it were, and we are allowed, at times grudgingly it may be, to have a share in it. We happily live under a constitution whose watchword is freedom, and whose main pillar is toleration. We look back complacently on our past history and glory in it. Can we then, in the midst of this national upheaval, remain quiescent and indifferent? The same generous causes that are at work elsewhere have been operating here also, and any difference in the results hitherto obtained is attributable mainly to the fact that these causes reached

here last in point of time. We may naturally be somewhat behind the other provinces in the race of progress, but we are not idle, and if we be true to the traditions with which our past records are replete, we should try hard to make up our deficiencies and take our proper place in the march of national advancement.

It would be superfluous now to meet the stale old charge of disloyalty and sedition brought against the Congress. It has been discussed threadbare, and the Congress has come triumphant out of the discussion. The highest authority in the land—the head of the Government of India—has been pleased to characterize the Congress as a ‘perfectly legitimate’ movement ‘representing in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced liberal party.’ No endeavour was spared to traduce the Congressmen, to call them all manner of harsh and disreputable names, to attribute to them selfish and other motives, to misrepresent their aims and objects, and to discredit them before the public in India and in England. But we are happy to be able to say that, not only have the Congressmen survived all the desperate endeavours of their opponents, but have actually grown so influential that, when a short time ago, an attempt was made to get up an anti-Congress demonstration in one of the important cities of this province not far from the capital, the all-powerful district officer actually discouraged the attempt on the ground that such a demonstration, even though backed by all the official influence of that place, would prove perfectly abortive and quite inadequate for the purpose of stemming the tide of educated public opinion in favour of the national movement. The district officer was right.

The hand of the clock cannot be put back. The country has been advancing rapidly under the banner which floats and flutters in the air proudly from Peshawar to Calcutta. The arbiter of the destiny of nations has not placed the people of this vast country under the aegis of British rule for no purpose. The ancient mother of art and science, of religion and philosophy, rent and torn by internal dissension and trampled under the oppressor’s relentless foot, was to be rescued from her woeful fate, and lo! a body of obscure merchants was sent out to trade in the East, and how this magnificent empire was built up subsequently is known to the readers of history. But these merchants from the far West were only the means to an end. Flushed with success exultant man often arrogates to himself



what he could have never dreamt to accomplish without the help of the Almighty, the causer of causes.

“There is a divinity that shapes our ends.” It is this divinity that shaped the ends of the body of obscure merchants, instilled patience and wisdom in their breast, expanded their views, enabled them to overcome their older and more powerful competitors, diverted their attention from commerce to conquest, taught them to form a mature organization out of raw materials, inspired them with the principles of righteous toleration and led them along the career of splendid achievements which are now the wonder and admiration of the whole civilized world. Verily there is a deeper meaning in all this than that a handful of Englishmen should grow rich at the expense and miseries of the countless millions that inhabit this woe-worn land. England’s mission in India would remain unfulfilled if she failed to raise a once great but now fallen country from her present degraded position, to place her on the path of moral, material and political advancement and prosperity.

It is this mission which the Indian National Congress calls upon England to perform. It is for this that we are knocking at her door. Happily for both England and India, the genius of the English people is eminently fitted for the performance of this mission. Their views and sympathies are as liberal as their possessions are worldwide and it is therefore that they have been able to establish an Empire over which the sun never sets. In the economy of providence there is always a fitness of things, an adaptation of means to ends; and if at this moment England heads the great Powers of the world it is because she has eminently deserved her exalted position. And that position she will continue to occupy and to maintain as long as she does not descend from her high moral pedestal, and governs the people committed to her care by providence, not in the interests of the rulers but of the ruled. For ourselves we are fully conscious of the numerous boons we have received at her hands and our hearts overflow with gratitude. Those who call us ungrateful either do not understand us or misrepresent us. The Indian mind still connects Royalty with Divinity and considers it a meritorious act to have a sight of the royal person. It has not yet been divested of the notion that the king is the vicegerent of God on earth, not that law is superior even to a king. This makes Indians the most loyal and law-abiding people on the face of earth. What the Congress

contends is not that the country should be transferred from English to Indian hands—no, not the change of hands, for it would be entirely suicidal—but that the people should be governed on those broad and liberal principles which have been held by eminent British statesmen and administrators themselves to be most conducive to the interests of both the rulers and the subjects.

The constitution of all civilized Governments allows appeal to the highest authorities. British India is no exception to this rule. The laws in force here permit appeal in almost every branch of administration. The judgement of an inferior officer is open to examination by his superior. Why should then the exercise of this privilege in matters constitutional be looked on with any disfavour at all? The Congress has been called seditious and disloyal—not because it aims at overturning the foundations of British rule in India—for it is patent that its attempts are, on the contrary, directed towards consolidating those foundations—but because it petitions for the rights of the people guaranteed by repeated declaration of the highest authorities, and proposes in case of ill success in this country to lay their case before Her Majesty's Government in England, before the British Parliament and before the British nation, the ultimate courts of appeal in whose probity and sense of justice and fairplay they have unbounded confidence. To do this effectually the Congress has to discuss questions vitally connected with the well-being of the Indian people and to lay their grievances before the bar of English public opinion which otherwise cannot know, or understand, those grievances, or grant any redress. Is there anything wrong or unnatural in this procedure?

It is the law of supply and demand which is a recognized principle in political economy. It is said that it is demand that brings in the supply. Man is so constituted that want is natural to him. When the want is felt the supply comes. Providence thus meets all demands. Even the man of religion has said that there can be no supply without demand. Did not the greatest teacher, the prince of prophets, say 'ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you?' Of course that is the law of prayer and inspiration in the world of spirit, but the same, interpreted in the language of flesh means the law of demand and supply.

Now, gentlemen, imagine if it is not the law of our Anglo-Indian



opponents, the utterances of their acknowledged saviour? Is it not strange that they should object to our following the footsteps of their own great master? Is it not unwise and impolitic as well as unchristian, of them to oppose the behaviour which 'the beloved son of God' commands us to adopt?

Besides, there is a common saying that 'the mother does not give milk till the child weeps.' What wrong are we doing? Where is our crime? We are simply knocking at the door of the great British and Christian nation. We are crying for milk, nay even for water, before mother England. Is it improper on her part to give us a suckle? The hungry and thirsty children at her gate, the people of India, the weeping children of mother England expect nourishment from that great English nation. We might be alien in race and creed, in manners and customs, ideas and thoughts, but without asking, seeking and knocking hard at the door of our paternal Government, we cannot find redress. We should be foremost to admit that in times past before we could lisp, we received precious gifts from the hands of the Government, which we still possess and enjoy. But now that we have learnt to articulate it we are not precluded from praying for better gifts, beneficial alike to ourselves and our rulers and also essential for the good government of the country.

The Congress has passed eight years of its existence but what are eight years in the life of a nation? Yet, within this brief period, it has succeeded in obtaining a few concessions which we highly prize, and these concessions should open the eyes of the wary and suspicious amongst us and encourage us all to persevere in the cause we have taken up for the amelioration of the condition of our country. These concessions prove the generosity of which the British nation is capable and they establish the consolation that, if we apply to it for succour in our need, our appeal will not be futile or abortive. Let us then keep steadily the object we have in view, work strenuously in 'faith, hope and charity,' perfect our organization, strive with all our might to lift our nation from the despondency in which it is immersed and respectfully, but firmly, approach our rulers for the great good... And let us trust that our rulers will not misunderstand our utterances, nor misjudge our actions, but will be considerate and charitable towards us. Give us our just rights, concede our reasonable demands, govern us on principles of equity and good conscience and

strengthen the foundations of the empire by broadbasing it upon the people's will.

The distinguished President of the first and eighth Congresses in his inaugural address at Allahabad last year, declared that the second cycle of the Congress began under his presidency. It is a happy coincidence that the second Congress of the second cycle should have been proposed to be held under the leadership of the same illustrious countryman of ours, who guided the deliberations of the second Congress of the first cycle. I shall not anticipate your proceedings, but nevertheless I cannot help congratulating ourselves on having in our midst one who has devoted all the talents and energies of a lifetime, with a supreme singleness of purpose to promoting our cause, and who by dint of ability, indomitable courage and perseverance has forced his way to the highest deliberative assembly in the British empire, the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland. I am referring, I need scarcely tell you, to Mr Dadabhai Naoroji, who has inaugurated a new era in Indian political life and whose name now is a household word throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Those who assert that he does not represent the people of India in the House of Commons err grievously. The glorious receptions he has been accorded since his landing at Bombay should suffice to remove their error. All India, with one heart, accepts his representation, and hopes that immeasurable good will flow from it at no distant date. We must heartily congratulate ourselves on having, also in our midst, him who first directed our aims and aspirations, guided and controlled our counsels, cheered us in our difficulties, spent large sums of money, abandoned rest and comfort to promote our tottering cause and laid the foundation-stone of that grand fabric which now proudly rears its lofty head. I mean our kind, noble, and affectionate friend Mr Hume, the Father of the Indian National Congress. He has undertaken a long voyage to benefit us, to call us to our sense of duty, to rouse our flagging zeal, to stir up our drooping spirits, to encourage us with his presence, and we are particularly fortunate in having the advantage of his guidance, advice and active co-operation at this the first session of the Congress in this province. May he and Mr Dadabhai Naoroji both be spared long to work on behalf of suffering humanity in general and this country in particular!

The business before us this session is fairly large, and I have carefully



refrained from touching upon any of the subjects included in it for fear of needlessly encroaching upon your time. Before, however, I conclude I must ask you to conceive the joy, because it is beyond all power of expression, which fills my heart at the sight of this great assembly—an assembly consisting of the cream of the Indian community. And I accord you once more a most hearty and cordial welcome to our old historic city.





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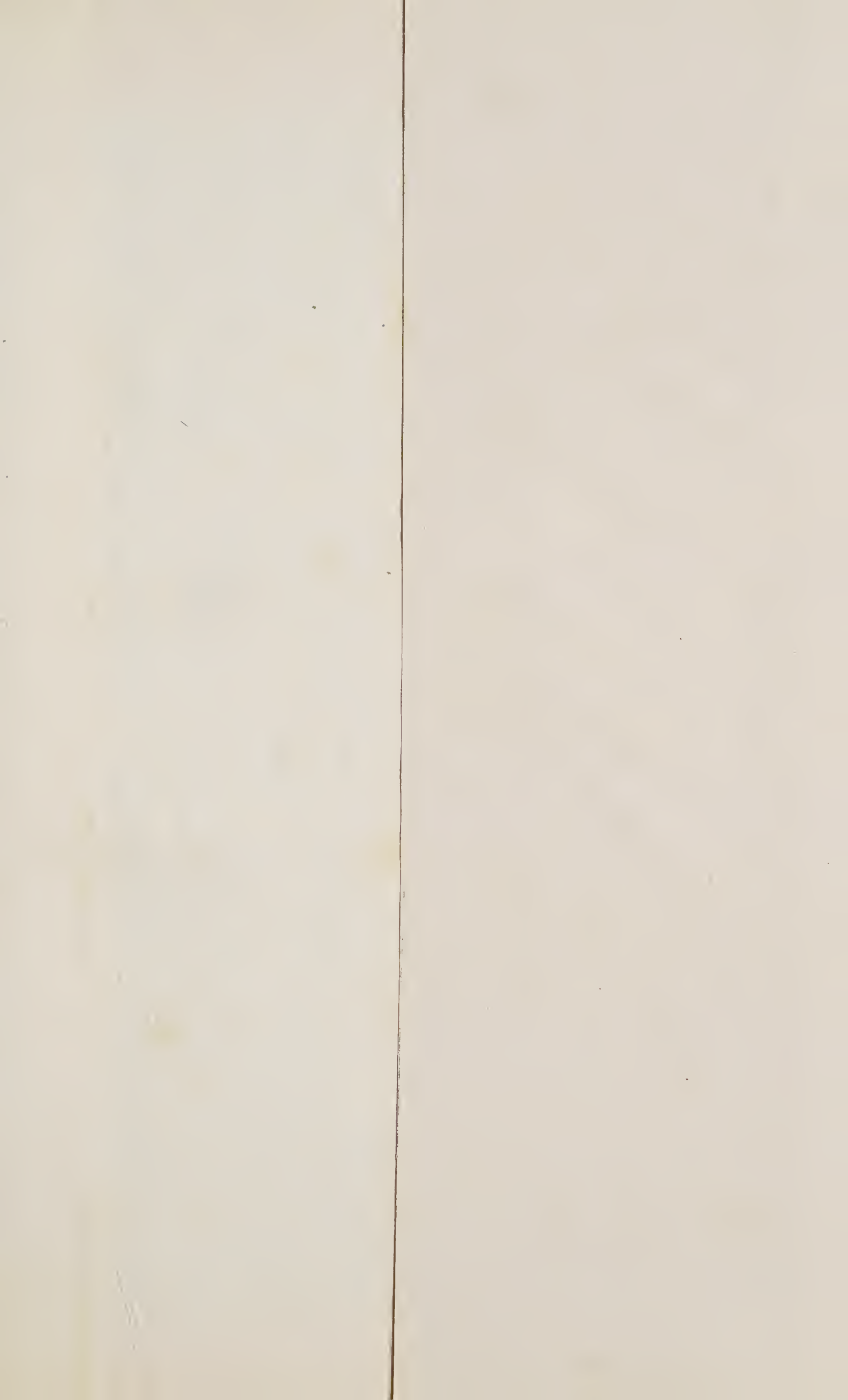












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